Dr Abraham T Kovoor

(1898—1978)

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Gods, Demons And Spirits

by

Dr Abraham T Kovoor

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Edited

by

V A Menon

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Gods Demons and Spirits

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FOREWORD

Dr. Abraham Kovoor was, up to the last moment of his life, a crusader against superstition and obscurantism. It was good of Mr. V. A. Menon to have thought of posthumously bringing out the late rationalist's plea for the scientific outlook on life.

The exposures made in this volume show not only the absurdity of superstitious beliefs against which the late Dr. Kovoor was fighting all his life, but also the widespread character of these superstitious beliefs. It is well-known that many of the actions of politicians, statesmen, administrators—and even scientists—are guided by considerations arising out of superstitious faith, mercilessly exposed in this volume.

Among the incidents quoted by the author is one concerning the former Prime Minister of India, Mrs Gandhi. Although the report was denied on her behalf in a letter to Dr. Kovoor, it is well-known that Mrs Gandhi, both during her prime ministership as well as subsequently, put great reliance on astrologers. Hers however, is no solitary case. The malady is far wider and it goes to the credit of Dr. Kovoor that he spent his whole life fighting such beliefs and faiths

Like other rationalists, Dr. Kovoor does not go beyond exposing the falsity of superstitious beliefs, religious faiths, social practices etc, which corrode human society today, particularly society in the Asian Continent. He does not raise, much less answer, the question why these beliefs and practices arose and continue to dominate the collective thinking of humanity even after centuries of scientific developments. Lacking the world outlook of historical materialism, he is unable to trace the ideological root of religion and various forms of superstition; he does not try to relate social consciousness to social being; he therefore fails to relate the growth of scientific thought,

co-existing with the persistence of religious faiths and superstitious beliefs to the basic problem of man s strug gle against nature in the course of which man creates a class society and class ideology

We Marxists relate the struggle against religious faith and superstitious beliefs to the social question of class struggle No amount of dedicated work by enlightened intellectuals and scientists would create a scientific out look among the mass of the people unless this work of enlightenment is integrated with the working people s struggle against their class oppressors It is here that rationalists failed—among them Dr Kovoor one of the most dedicated and most brilliant rationalists

It should however be noted—and this is important for Marxists—that class struggle in the narrow sense of the term i e struggle on the economic or even economic plus political fronts will not create a scientific outlook among working people As Lenin noted with reference to one of the basic postulates of creating class conscious ness it is necessary to carry on a continuous uncompro mising struggle on *the theoretical front which alone to* gether with the struggle on the economic and political fronts would enable the working class to play its role as the creator of a new society

We Marxists therefore cannot afford to adopt any con temptuous attitude towards the crusading spirit shown by rationalist thinkers like the late Dr Kovoor The exposure made in GODS DEMONS AND SPIRITS would prove eminently useful in this struggle on the theoretical front

New Delhi E M S NAMBOODIRIPAD

DR KOVOOR—A Profile

What made the late Dr Abraham T Kovoor a dynamic rationalist or atheist, who could attract listeners wherever he went, was the wealth of his experience as a buster of superstitious beliefs through on the-spot personal probes, and the remarkable communicative skill he had developed over the years Dr Kovoor was an excellent teacher to begin with His rhetorical skill his charming voice and steady and clear accent and the conviction and confidence he exuded while presenting his arguments his transparent sincerity and contagious enthusiasm and above all his total intellectual and emotional commitment to the cause of fighting superstitions and anti scientific beliefs enabled him to project a magnetic personality As a result he had ardent admirers as well as bitter critics No one could take an equivocal attitude towards Dr Kovoor

Another praiseworthy quality of Dr Kovoor was his unfailing and ever-strengthening courage of conviction and action and his readiness to sacrifice personal comforts in the cause of his mission He would not budge even in the face of a violently hostile group of hecklers or detractors At the same time he would not deviate from balanced intellectual arguments and fall a prey to the sentiment of hatred or indulge in abuse or personal attack He was as dignified as he was unflinching He was as obstinate as he was undogmatic His mind was agile and young even in his ripe old age his face never showed signs of intellectual fatigue his eyes never lost the piercingly sharp intellectual look

The life ethic and intellectual culture Kovoor practiced was truly consistent with his rationalist atheist outlook Individual life was not eternal, nor was there any eternally surviving soul enshrined in the human body Individual life was a transient phenomenon It existed according to certain biological laws which were part of the entire nexus of material reality A life of rational re-

conciliation with the rest of the world was the motto of a rationalist The success of Dr Kovoor as a rationalist atheist lay in the fact that he had reached this reconciliation, as a result of which he had achieved a creative poise, intellectual vibrancy, psychic equilibrium One might say this was a kind of *nirvana* or *moksha* For, what after all is meant by such terms devoid of their idealistic projection? Man must relate himself to the rest of existence, the individual must find a creative and harmonious role within the collective, human society must find its positive ties with the ecological surroundings These could be possible if only the individual understood the nature of reality scientifically, if only he was free from concepts and images that were unreal, concepts and images that built a fantastic barrier between him and natural reality

Kovoor strove all his life to popularise a scientific vision of life, of natural processes, of mental processes of Being in general While saying this, I must also say that Kovoor did not concern himself adequately with politics and sociology But it must be emphasised that while confining himself to psychological phenomena, traditional superstitions and ritualistic practices that militated against science, Kovoor did not say anything unscientific or retrogressive about political and social issues In this he was different from Gora or Gopiraju Ramachandra Rao who was a very active and untiring atheist but a proclaimed Gandhian and Sarvodayite Gora rejected historical materialism and considered Marxism to be a 'fatalistic philosophy' He had gone to the extent of saying that dialectical philosophy was metaphysical But Kovoor did not deviate from his chosen path of exposures of spiritual frauds and psychological investigations His was a pointed and well defined attack of superstitious beliefs He did not venture into other areas His silence could even be interpreted as reflecting his agreement with the Marxist philosophy In fact in private talks he used to express his concurrence with the Marxian approach but as he did not intend to extend his rationalist propaganda to areas other than what he had mapped

out early in life, he scrupulously adhered to his fight against religious superstitions

Kovoor, again, was different from Periyar' Ramaswami Naicker, the militant iconoclast uncompromising fighter against the caste system and a very colourful personality in the Tamil cultural movement and the father of the Dravidian political movement Of course there was the basic difference that Kovoor was an academician and his atheistic revolt was based on intellectualism appeal ing to the rationalistic instinct of the educated while Naicker s appeal was addressed to the illiterate and semi literate and the socially oppressed sections in Tamil Nadu and Mr Naicker was no academic The different social and cultural backgrounds and the different targets they had had naturally influenced their styles too Kovoor being a biological scientist having connections with uni versities and academic institutions in the east and west used the vocabulary of modern science and heavily drew on scientific research in presenting his arguments

In the socio cultural milieu from which Kovoor emerged viz the Kerala Society there were and are many militant atheists The rationalist or atheist move ment has a tradition of several decades Sahodaran Ayyappan a disciple of reformer saint Narayana Guru the late Prof Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai an eminent literary critic and essayist and admirer of Narayana Guru were militant rationalists Then there is M C Joseph the Grand Old Man of Kerala rationalist movement Many a leftist political leader of Kerala began as rational ists But none of them could achieve the intellectual glamour of Kovoor I feel the very physical appearance of Kovoor was quite impressive His neck tie his cap his beard, his lean physique, his sharp eyes his pointed nose, his rich voice his rhythmic speech his wide know ledge and authoritative demeanour the deep conviction with which he spoke his well known challenges his ad vertised tours his movements surrounded by enthusiastic admirers etc, were unique All these coupled with his incisive analysis and research stories, resulted in the

emergence of what can be termed as the Kovoor phenomenon

There were two broad aspects to Kovoor's activities as a rationalist One was his exposure of eastern superstitions which thrived in South India and Sri Lanka He was immersed in this work for many years and has written interesting accounts about his solving specific puzzles and situations An extension of these exposures could be seen in his confrontations with India's godmen like Sathya Sai Baba in later years Another aspect of Kovoor's work is related to his articles analysing fatalism, astrology, religious and moral codes, psychical disorders caused by superstitious beliefs etc In doing this he did not go into abstrule logical and philosophical analysis as Bertrand Russell did Bertrand Russell was basically a mathematician and philosopher addicted to logical analysis while Kovoor was a natural scientist who in his official academic duties was concerned with plant life particularly Moreover, the English scholastic atmosphere did not exist in India or in Sri Lanka Here one had to content against primitive rituals and beliefs, as industrialisation and modernisation were yet to catch up So the European rationalist movement did not find similar expression in India

Kovoor did not reduce rationalism to a dogma He did not want to be the 'Pope of rationalists', as some people used to describe him He did not bother to write a treatise on rationalism He just relied on science and the scientific method Thereby he showed that apart from science and its methodology there was no need to create a new 'ism' by rationalists

It is true as a psychologist Kovoor followed the psychoanalytic method of Freud This only showed that the psychoanalytic method has still its usefulness in probing the hidden motives of individuals and also in unravelling the repressions etc, that create emotional problems The limitations of the Freudian scheme or its certain mythmaking features did not stand in the way of Kovoor's practical work which had achieved results

In any case Kovoor was always concerned with the immediate problem at hand He did not try to project himself as a philosopher or thought system builder He was very busy with his campaigns, exposures and confrontations

Kovoor could not stand for a moment intellectual cheats who exploited the gullibles for monetary gain His fight was directed against such exploiters In this he was surely behaving as a socially moral person conscious and conscientious about his ethical and intellectual role in society

One may finally wonder for what gain Kovoor did take so much trouble Was it just for prestige or egoistic satisfaction? The answer should be in the negative. Certainly any one who puts all his energies into a public cause (in Kovoor's case it was the cause of eradicating ignorance and mental slavery arising out of it) gains prestige and popularity as a consequence Kovoor was no exception But Kovoor never showed any sign of being moved by praise or public acclaim He was unaffected by applause as well as ridicule His guide was his rationalist conscience No one could doubt his intellectual honesty and his ethics as a social being who cared for the fellow beings' welfare and intellectual awakening

Kovoor was a happy man He had realised how happy it would be to be rational No superstitions no fears and no dogmas His was a mind that reached out to freedom propelled by the fuel of knowledge It rose and rose and had a vision of Being from the height of rationalist self realisation a realisation that ruled out an eternal self So he had no difficulty in willing that his body after death should be used for medical research and that his eyes should be used for grafting Here was a balanced man with a mind attuned to the laws of nature

Finally I would like to call Kovoor a scientific humanist, as defined in Webster's Third New International Dictionary, according to which humanism is

"a doctrine set of attitudes or way of life centered upon human interests or values as *a* a philosophy that rejects supernaturalism regards man as a natural object, and asserts the essential dignity and worth of man and his capacity to achieve self realisation through the use of reason and the scientific method *b often cap* a religion subscribing to these beliefs"

This definition, excluding the term 'religion', I think, would eminently suit Kovoor's personality

HARIHARAN POONJAR

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Abraham Kovoor, the renowned and controversial rationalist campaigner, is no more. He breathed his last on September 18, 1978 at the ripe age of 80 at Colombo, where he was a permanent resident, ever since he had migrated to Sri Lanka after a brief teaching career in Kerala, the land of his birth. He was active in the rationalist movement till the end though he was suffering from cancer in the bladder.

Consistent with his rationalist-humanist outlook Dr. Kovoor, just as his wife Mrs. Acca Kovoor who had died in 1974, had willed that his body be given to the medical college in Colombo so that even in death he would serve humanity. And he had donated his eyes to a Madras hospital, which were promptly grafted on two blind men.

Kovoor has expired, yet he shall live through the ages, as the ideals he stood for all his life will triumph ultimately as humanity wades through ignorance and superstitions and unites on a planetary basis guided by genuine scientific knowledge about man and the universe.

This is the second book of essays by Dr. Kovoor I have had the privilege to edit. The first one 'Begone Godmen' which was also published by Jaico was released in the presence of Kovoor himself. The great popularity of that book, which ran into several editions in a couple of years, has prompted me to compile the present collection. These essays too are infused with the remarkable Kovoor spirit—uncompromising exposure of superstitions and irrational attitudes. Kovoor, the buster of superstitions, is at his best in these essays.

I am thankful to E. M. S. Namboodiripad, an outstanding Marxist thinker, historian and a perceptive commentator of Indian traditions and current affairs for his

thought-provoking foreword The questions he raises are of great contemporary relevance to the rationalist movement

I am also indebted to Hariharan Poonjar, Assistant Editor, *Free Press Journal*, for writing the profile of the late Dr Kovoor Mr Poonjar knew Dr Kovoor personally and has made a deep study of his works

Bombay V A MENON

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Chapter—1

ON LOOKING BACK

During one of my lecture tours in India, I got a chance of spending a few days at my ancestral home where I was born some 80 years ago. During that stay at home I was able to salvage a few volumes of my illustrious father's chronicles from a pile of moth-eaten books in a discarded box unopened for many years. Knowing the historical value of these diaries, which ran into several pages each day, concerning the activities of a religious and social leader who lived during the second half of the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th centuries, I decided to present them to the Kerala Sahitya Academy. I handed them over to my friend Mr. Pavanan, one of the secretaries of Kerala Sahitya Academy, at a public meeting held at Kottayam last year.

While reading through the pages of those diaries I felt very proud to think that I was born as the son of an intellectual like The Very Reverend Kovoor Eipe Thomma Katthanar, the first Vicar General of the Mar Thomma Syrian Church of Malabar. Yet, on looking back to my childhood, I envied my own son Prof. Aries Kovoor of the Sorbonne University. Being born to rationalist parents, my son did not have the handicap of being brought up by religious parents as I was.

Like all others, I too was born as an accidental by-product of a momentary biological activity of my parents, over which I had neither control nor choice. I had no choice not only of my parents, but also of my mother tongue, community, religion, place and time of birth. Like everything in the universe I too am the product of a cosmic accident.

I was a Christian in my youth because I was born and brought up in a Christian home by Christian parents. Most of us cling on to our parents' religion because we

are indoctrinated by them from our childhood But, when I came of age to think and act independently, I discarded Christianity and became a rationalist because I could not accept the Bible as the word of an omniscient god Similarly I discarded the beautiful land of my birth—Kerala —and adopted Sri Lanka—an equally beautiful country —because most of the Sri Lankans are followers of Gouthama Buddha who taught a more rational and tolerant philosophy than the founders of any other religion For me human beings are more important than places In Sri Lanka I have three generations of loyal and affectionate students in all walks of life I am known to almost all literates in Sri Lanka, respected by many and hated by a few

I had my difficulty in finding a suitable spouse for me Over half a century ago it was not at all possible to find a Syrian Christian girl to adopt a rationalistic way of life I was fortunate to find such a girl in the eldest daughter of Justice Mr K M Itty of the Travancore Judicial Service. She was even agreeable to my prior condition that our children should not be brought up with any type of religious indoctrination

But even without any religious teaching at home, our only son started going to church when he was attending the Cambridge Senior class When my wife told me about our son's interest in church services, I warned her not to interfere with his own choice of a religion But later it transpired that it was the girls of the Vembadi Girls' College, and not religion that attracted him to the Church!

On looking back to my own boyhood a lot of interesting episodes come to my mind

A nephew of mine, the late Mr K M Pothan, whom we used to call Pappachen, was a classmate of mine at the Sunday School My cousin, Rev K P Thomas, was our teacher Pappachen, who always sat by my side, had the habit of getting answers from me, and then putting up his hand when questions were asked But he was rather reluctant to reciprocate it

Once after a lesson about Jesus Christ, who was being taken in procession through the streets of Jerusalem, call-

ing Zachias to come down from the fig tree on which he climbed to have a better view of Jesus, and blessing him for his faith, the teacher asked the class, "How did Jesus Christ know that Zachias was on the fig tree?" As usual Pappachen sought my help "Zachias plucked a fig fruit and dropped it on the head of Christ exactly when he came under the tree", was the answer I gave Unsuspecting my mischief, Pappachen put his hand up. As other children failed to answer, Pappachen, who had his hand up, was asked Rev Thomas got so wild at Pappachen's impudent answer that he was called out to stand punishment During the caning Pappachen shouted out that I had misled him

In my boyhood I was intrigued by Nambudiris going along roads shouting "hoi" and "ha" at regular intervals to drive away the "untouchables" from their paths Once I was going with our servant Kunhiraman, an Ezhava by caste, to uproot some tapioca from a compound a mile away We had to cross a ferry, which is now bridged by "Muthoor Palam" The senior Nambudiri of Mambazhamadam was waiting alone at the ferry as he did not know how to punt the boat across The ferry boat was a very narrow one which could carry about five or six people only Nambudiri got into the boat first and moved towards the bow and wanted me to punt the boat across, drop him on the other side, and then bring back the boat to take the untouchable Kunhiraman Without showing my anger at this arrogant suggestion I got into the boat and ordered Kunhiraman to get in When he hesitated, I had to use force to push him into the boat Just at the moment Kunhiraman was about to come in contact with the boat, the Nambudiri jumped into the river without knowing that it was deep As the brahmin who did not know swimming was about to get drowned, I asked Kunhiraman, who was an expert swimmer, to save the Nambudiri from a watery grave The Brahmin felt very humiliated when I asked him, before the crowd that had collected, "Do you want to bathe again to wash away the impurity of being touched by an Ezhava?"

The dominant and extensive hill, on which is the Syrian Christian Seminary where I had my school education, was

acquired by my father for building the school which was till that time housed in my ancestral home This hill, with the numerous buildings on it, has now become the Head Quarters of the Mar Thomma Syrian Church The senior Bishop of the Church—Methrachen—had his resi dence there Majority of boys in the boarding house were from suburban places like Kozhenchery, Ayeroor, Kuri yannoor, Kumbanad, etc

It was a practice those days to buy paddy in bulk during harvest season for the use of the boarding house Some of us were once watching from the upstair verandah of the school, labourers spreading paddy on large mats spread in the football field A boy from Kozhenchery— P E Easau—who was a newcomer to my class and the boarding house wanted to know why such a large quan tity of paddy was being dried "It is for the feast next month in connection with Methrachen's wedding", said I My friend M J Philip from Thokalasen confirmed adding "There will be feasting for three days, and the school will be closed for a week." Jubilant Easau told this story not only to his boarding mates from Kozhen chery, but also wrote to his parents that he would be coming home next month for a week during "Methra chen's wedding."

The news about Methrachen's wedding spread like wild fire in the boarding house as well as in the parish of Kozhenchery The pious Marthomites of Kozhenchery were indignant about the scandalous news The Bishops of the Mar Thomma Church, unlike those of the Angli can Church, were strictly prevented from allowing their sex glands and organs to perform their functions They sought confirmation of this shocking news from their parish priest, Rev K T Thomas

A simple joke I cracked at P E Easau ended up as the subject of an official enquiry Finally I had to stand six cuts from the headmaster Mr P V Varughese Had I cracked this joke at the C M S High School at Kot tayam, some 18 miles from Tiruvalla, I would not have been caned because the Anglican Bishop of Kottayam could marry any number of times!

I had three sisters from my father s first wife One of them was married to Mr P J Thomas at Kollankeril Aymanam, Kottayam Because of the great age difference between us I called her Ammamma

In my boyhood I stayed at her house for a week One morning she came to me and said, 'Kunjavaracha, you had been coughing throughout last night. I have a very good medicine for cough given by the famous ayurvedic physician—Olasha Mooses and I will give you some '

Ammamma brought a powder mixed in honey, and asked me to put it on the tongue and slowly suck it while praying to Jesus to cure my cough "Ammamma if I do both at the same time I won't be knowing which of the two helped to remove the cough So I will take the medicine now, and if there is no effect I can try prayer later', said I "What a pity that a non believer like you was born to my good father", lamented my dear sister!

During my university days in Calcutta I took a fancy to dress like my intimate friend Kripal Singh from Punjab One night at about 10 p m I was walking fairly fast along Manning Street to reach the hostel before the gate was closed In my hurry I collided with an Englishman coming from the opposite direction Automatically I said "I am sorry" and continued to walk

Those were the days when every Tom Dick and Harry from Britain thought that he was in India as the representative of 'His Imperial Majesty" and looked down on every Indian as a "subject" to be "governed" A minute later he came after me unaware and held me tight My collar, tie and beard was in his tight fist

I was then in the prime of my youth with muscles developed well through body building exercises I held him back and let go a mighty blow flat on his face He reeled back and fell on some crockeries belonging to a pavement trader He was bleeding profusely from his nose As I lifted him up the Bengali traders on the pavement came round him in a threatening mood He appealed to me for protection I pushed the crowd back and told him "If you had the good sense and courtesy to reciprocate when I expressed my sorrow after the accidental collision nothing would have happened But

your imperial pride did not allow you to see an equal fellow human being in me" Although he was profuse in his apology, I made him pay the trader for the broken crockeries

Rev P T Cash who was the Principal of Jaffna Central College—an institution run by the Methodist Mission—was responsible for my leaving the C M S College Kottayam and going to Sri Lanka to join his college I joined Jaffna Central College in 1928 The day prior to the reopening of the college after the Christmas holidays there was a devotional retreat for the members of the staff, followed by a community lunch As there was a dry spell in Jaffna that year, Rev Cash added an appeal to god for rain during his prayers after the retreat

I was seated opposite to Cash at the lunch table During conversation I asked Cash about the science behind weather forecasting He gave a graphic description of the scientific methods adopted by meteorologists To my further question whether it was possible to make a fairly accurate weather forecast for Jaffna for a period of 48 hours Rev Cash said that it could be done provided data are collected from meteorologists in surrounding places like Madras Bombay, Singapore the Maldive Islands etc

I then aked him whether the Colombo Observatory, which prepares the weather chart for the Northern Province of Sri Lanka will be including his prayer for rain also among the data Instead of giving me a straight answer, Rev Cash said, "Abraham you have trapped me well and truly let us forget it and enjoy our lunch"

In 1928 when I joined Jaffna Central College, Christian scripture could be offered as one of the subjects for the Cambridge Senior examination Rev Cash asked me whether I could teach scripture for a batch of students who were preparing for that examination I gladly accepted it When the results of the Cambridge Senior examination came next year I was very happy to see that all my students—many of them Hindus—passed in scripture, some of them with distinction

It was a great disappointment for me to see that next year a Methodist missionary from England—Rev O. L.

Gibbon—was put in charge of teaching scripture to the next batch of students I asked Rev Cash, "I produced better results in scripture than my favourite subject Botany Why is it that I am deprived of the privilege of teaching that subject this year?" "Abraham, I know you produced the best result we ever had in scripture But all your students lost their faith in the Bible', said Rev Cash!

In 1959, I was admitted to the paying ward at the General Hospital, Colombo, suffering from the first of five heart attacks. The three beds in the room were occupied by one Mr Gunasekara, a political leader belonging to the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, Rev "X", a religious leader from Moratuwa, and myself, a rationalist leader all suffering from coronary thrombosis

One Saturday evening the staff nurse informed Rev "X" that there was a telephone message from the Bishop's palace informing that the Bishop of Colombo would be coming the next day to give Holy Mass to the sick priest The priest showed signs of panic on hearing that message He might have thought that the Bishop was coming to give him the Last Unction as his death was nearing

Next day The Right Rev Rollo Graham Bishop of Colombo, and his Chaplain The Rev Canon Basil Jaya wardena walked into the room with the Holy Mass As they walked in I took a book in my hand and pretended to be reading it, although my attention was on what was going on When prayers and the Communion were over, the Bishop came to me and the Chaplain to Mr Gunasekara Looking at the title of my book on the cover, the Bishop said 'You are reading a very controversial book!" The book I had in my hand happened to be "The Sex Behaviour of American Youths" by Dr Kinsey

'This book is not so controversial as the Bible in your hands', said I 'This is based on facts collected during the research conducted by Dr Kinsey and his students, whereas the Bible is full of fictitious stories like the "Arabian Nights", "Gulliver's Travels", etc"

"You seem to be a sceptic What is your ailment, brother?" asked the Bishop

'The same ailment as that of your parish priest of Moratuwa', said I.

'May I pray for you ?

No, no, no I came here for medical treatment and I am improving under expert medical treatment I do not want you to take a share of the credit for curing me You yourself know that your prayers are of no use If you could cure through prayers you would not have brought your parish priest here for medical treatment Now that he is improving you have come to take a share of the credit The Bishop was taken aback by my blurt At this stage the Chaplain came and whispered to the Bishop about my identity

"This is the first time in my life a sick person to whichever religion he belongs refuses to be praved for . said the good Bishop

Hospital wards with patients anticipating death and prison wards with prisoners anticipating capital punish ment are very good hunting grounds for religious priests!

In March 1953 I had the chance to share a table at a hotel in Colombo with an American couple who had come to Sri Lanka after a month's tour in India When I asked them about their impressions about India the lady remarked "The country is good but the people are a set of superstitious fools" She gave me a vivid description of the horrible sight they saw at Prayag in Allahabad during that year's 'kumbhamela"

About 60 lakhs of people had collected at the con fluence of the 'sacred rivers Ganga Jumna and an imaginary Saraswathi believed by the gullibles as an invisible river coming down from the heaven They came there with the hope of washing away all their sins by dipping their bodies at the confluence at the auspicious time of the Kumbhamela The auspicious time is signalled by the sounding of conch shells and temple bells Lakhs and lakhs of men and women in their anxiety not to miss the auspicious moment, rush into the river without even wasting time to lift up anyone who happens to slip in the extremely slippery mud and fall

After the sacred bathing is over, thousands of mud ------ dead bodies are collected from the banks of the

river This type of mass death of human beings did not seem to worry anyone. For the gullibles such a death is a covetable one because they are all sure to go to heaven or be reborn in a better state! But for the Americans it was a gruesome sight

Pointing out the absurdity of the President of India Dr Rajendra Prasad also being one among the gullible fools who had come to wash off their sins at Prayag, Mrs Roberts (that was the American lady's name) asked me "Have you ever given serious thought about the amount of superstitions among your people?'

"I have given serious thoughts about the superstitions of my people as well as of your people", said I

"Do you think that our people also are superstitious?'

"Yes, our scriptures and our priests tell us that our sins can be washed off by dipping in the sacred waters of the Ganges, and the people blindly believe it and act accordingly Your scriptures and your priests also tell you that your sins can be washed off by an external wash called baptism or by an internal wash called Holy Communion, and you blindly accept it Fortunately for you there is no auspicious time for bapt sm and holy mass hence no stampede and consequent deaths", I said Mr Robert who was all the time listening to our conversation said 'Sir, you have given enough food for thought for both of us'

I was invited to dinner once by the Ceylon Pentecostalists at their Head Quarters It was only when I reached there with my wife that I knew the main purpose of the invitation Including some European Pentecostalists, all the leaders of that Christian denomination were there to have a debate with me.

Although I explained giving scientific evidence that the so-called "speaking in tongue" was nothing but a neurotic condition called "glossolalia", I was not able to remove their blind belief that such ability was due to the possession of Holy Ghost

When we moved on to the dining table I was given a seat by the side of Pastor Alwines Discussions continued even during the dinner The main topic now was the refusal of Pentecostalists to take medicine when one

falls sick "We appeal to God to cure the disease which He himself has created as a punishment for some sins committed by the patient", said Pastor Alwines, and continued. "It is wrong for man to take medicines to defeat God's purpose"

"If man is able to defeat God in his purpose through medical science, does it not mean that man is more powerful than your god? If you can't take medicine, why are you now eating food?" I asked.

"Food is not medicine, and Jesus himself took food", Pastor Alwines said.

"You are wrong. food is a medicine for a disease called hunger, and water a medicine for the disease called thirst", concluded I.

Chapter—2

UNDER-DEVELOPMENT AND SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

Lord Fenner Brockway (then Mr. Brockway) the Labour M.P. of Great Britain, and myself, President of the Rationalist Association of Ceylon, were among the guest speakers at the triennial conference of the "World Union of Freethinkers" held in 1961 at Surrey, England During his address, Lord Brockway said the "materialistic" people of the developed countries in the West should put a stop to the "undesirable" practice of giving economic aid to the "spiritualistic" people in the so-called developing countries in the East

I, the only Asiatic present at this august gathering, was rudely shocked and thoroughly disappointed to hear such a statement from a Labour M.P. of the United Kingdom, and of all people Lord Fenner Brockway who had been all along championing the cause of the subject peoples of British colonies. I had already formed a favourable impression about him because of his speeches in the House of Commons defending the freedom fighters of India and Ceylon.

Answering a question from me as to why he objected to the prosperous countries of the West giving help to the poorer countries of the East like the one from where I came, Fenner Brockway said:—

"It is true that comparatively we are richer than most of the countries of the East. We prosper because we work hard, depend on the fruits of science and technology without seeking the assistance of imaginary gods to better our life here and now. Your people, on the other hand, waste their time and energy to placate imaginary gods to better their lives after death! Do you want us to give you a share of the products of our hard labour to enable you to waste more time on prayers, meditation, poojas

and pilgrimages? Have you any idea of the number of man hours lost each year by able bodied men and women of your countries wasting time during working hours for their spiritual exercises? While bells are rung at our work places to enable the workers to rest and refresh themselves to do more and efficient work bells are rung several times during working time in certain Middle East countries to enable the workers to conduct their prayers for ensuring a better life after their death? Why do you expect help from us when you can get all what you need as boons from your gods?

Realising the truth of what Fenner Brockway said I had to keep quiet eating humble pie!!

Very seldom do we give serious thought to some of the absurd things we do in anticipation of benefits from *non existing gods*

While sensible persons in the industrial countries of the West consult specialists in scientific disciplines—economists engineers technologists etc—whenever they want to start a new industrial venture our people in the East even if they happen to be highly educated will not attempt any progressive venture without an astrologer showing the green light Auspicious times pirith and *poojas are more important* to our development projects than science and technology!

When there was severe drought in the catchment areas of Mousekelle and Castlereigh reservoirs some months ago a special pooja was conducted at Sri Mahabodhi Vihara at Anuradhapura to invoke the blessings of devas to produce rain The chief incumbent of Atamasthana who conducted the ceremony said that from the time of King Devanampiyatissa it had been the practice of reigning monarchs to bathe the Sri Mahabodhi with pirith water and pray for rains whenever there had been droughts

Within two hours of the ceremony the devas answered the prayers with a fairly heavy shower at Anuradhapura said a newspaper report

All those persons who were involved in this superstitious cult for producing rain by placating nonexisting devas were not illiterate aborigines of a primitive era but educated persons of an enlightened and civilised

people that live in Sri Lanka during the third quarter of the twentieth century! It was paradoxical to read in the same newspaper a couple of days later about some of these same persons, who indulged in the rain making cult at Anuradhapura, taking part and speaking at a seminar on "Water Management and Control" (It was rather strange that none of the speakers at this seminar spoke about the easy and cheap method of making rain water available for human use in any place and at any time by prayer.

Thermal Power and Temple Complex

It was reported that, in connection with the 100th birth anniversary of the late Mr D J Wimalasurendra, arrangements were made by the Minister of Irrigation and Power to lay the foundation stones for the construction of a temple complex on the dam site of the Mousekelle reservoir, and to dedicate them to the god Saman, the "guardian deity of the Samanala Adaviya", and invoke his blessings for the "successful completion of projects based on rivers which have their sources in the central massif, the domain of Saman"

Could Mr Wimalasurendra, the far-sighted engineer, have ever envisaged that several years after his death—in a space age—some people of Sri Lanka would be squandering taxpayers' money to build a temple complex in the hope of obtaining electric power through the blessings of a non-existing legendary god? Are we given foreign exchange, by the World Bank and friendly "materialistic" countries, to build temples for the regional gods of Sri Lanka or for development projects?

On reading this in the local newspapers the shocking news about the sacrifice of a 22 year old girl by the Adivasi tribes of Madhya Pradesh, India for ensuring the strength of a river dam under construction came to my mind Speaking about this incident in the State Assembly of Madhya Pradesh, the Chief Minister, Mr Sethi said, "This tragic crime resulted from the superstitious belief held by the illiterate and ignorant hill tribes of the area that the guardian deity of their hills could be

pleased by the shedding of blood of a virgin on the dam under construction"

All those who were responsible for this gruesome religious ritual are today in Indian jails It is gratifying that our people in Sri Lanka do not share the belief of the hill tribes of Madhya Pradesh! Our virgins are not in danger of being sacrificed to the god Saman!!

While we in Sri Lanka try to make rain by prayers and poojas, let us see what the leaders of our neighbouring country, India, are doing I quote below a news item from an Indian newspaper

"The artificial rain making experiments by seeding the clouds in the catchment areas of Madras city's water sources, which began last week, will be continued till the end of the month

'The experts in rain making will then move on to Coimbatore for similar operations in the hydral areas of the Nilgiris Till the middle of November they will be shuttling between Madras and Coimbatore, inducing the clouds to shed the rain in these two areas

'The result of the cloud seeding experiments in Poondi area near Madras for the past one week have been encouraging"

Although the masses in India are as superstitious as those of Sri Lanka, they seem to be more fortunate in that some of their leaders are prepared to discard primitive superstitious beliefs, and march forward towards progress and prosperity using scientific methods

Again under the caption "Pirith for a Week" the following news appeared in the Ceylon Daily News —

"A week-long pirith ceremony begins today in the Senate Library to invoke the blessings of the Triple Gem on the country Members of the public and many Buddhist organisations have been invited to participate"

Able-bodied men and women all over the country are invited to spend one full week without doing any work Can we afford to do so because there are "materialistic" people in the West to work hard for us and give us their surplus? How true Lord Fenner Brockway was when he said that the prosperous nations of the West should put a stop to the practice of giving aid to

the so-called developing countries! This is exactly how the priestly class originated When the primitive man, who lived by eating the flesh of animals he hunted, evolved into a farmer he could produce surplus food Crafty ones among primitive farmers started to live as parasites on the workers consuming their surplus products on the pretext of possessing miraculous powers to help them to make their "life after death" better!

Man—The Progressive Animal

Although the lower animals have better perceiving powers than men, there is no progress in their mode of life down the ages This is due to the fact that, unlike men they have no power of creative thinking The spider of today makes the same type of web as his ancestors did millions of years ago The pattern of the mud nest of the potter wasp has not improved since the time of their evolution The weaver bird and the tailor bird make the same type of nest as their ancestors did ages ago Even the apes of today lead the same type of life as their forbears did millions of years ago

On the other hand, man has progressed and is still progressing by leaps and bounds from the aboriginal state of their forbears In his shelter, food clothing, communication, travel, health, defence, offence, social life, economic security etc., man is progressing day by day

In his aboriginal state man lived like a savage killing animals and fellow humans with clubs and stones for his food They ate flesh raw When he ate the flesh of animals that were killed in forest fires, he found it softer This led him to the art of cooking When the flesh of the animals he killed got contaminated with salt, he found it tastier This led him to add spices to make his food more palatable He is improving his culinary skill day by day

By domesticating animals and cultivating edible plants he found that he could get a continuous supply of food and thus get more leisure to engage in intellectual activities. Today he is improving the quantity and quality of his food supply using scientific methods of hybridi-

sation and selective breeding Instead of depending on nature as animals do man is interfering with nature to improve his lot Modern man no more depends entirely on natural rain or rivers or on prayers and poojas for his water requirements He uses irrigation engineering tubewells and artificial rain making to obtain water when ever and wherever he needs it

From clubs and stones there is a gradual evolution in man s weapons of offence and defence Today he has atom bombs inter continental ballistic missiles torpedoes depth charges mines laser beams asphyxiating and in cendiary bombs and chemical and biological weapons

The primitive man s means of communication was gesticulations and modulations of certain sounds which in time gave rise to words As time went on he coined more and more words to improve his vocabulary He recorded his thoughts first as drawings on the walls of his cave dwellings and later on mud cakes With the development of the art of writing he was able to record his thoughts on stone slabs copper plates and ola leaves With the invention of the art of paper-making and print ing man was able to record more systematically his thoughts for the benefit of not only his contemporary fellow human beings but also for many yet to be born Today with the help of the radio TV and satellite communication man is able to communicate with his fellow beings even when they are in outer space or on another planet

Like the animals from which he evolved the primitive man s method of locomotion was by using his legs The evolution of his mode of travel from bullock cart and dug out canoes to the jet and atomic propulsion is as interesting as the evolution of his medical practices to preserve his health The primitive believed that diseases were caused either by the anger of imaginary gods and demons or by the possession of 'spirits of dead persons The technique he adopted for maintaining good health was by pleasing angry gods and demons by giving them bribes respectably called "offerings' or by appealing to them through poojas and prayers Medical practice was in the hands of a set of human parasites known as priests

or kattadiyas They claimed special powers to mediate between gods and men or to exorcise non-existing spirits from the bodies of the sick. Although this type of cult is still practised and patronised by ignorant persons intelligent men of today have improved their medical science by immunisation antibiotics organ transplanting blood transfusion surgery anaesthesis electronic pacemaker etc

Of all animals on this planet man alone has the capacity to progress going against the laws of nature or the plan of the creator because he alone has the capacity to engage in creative thinking This is due to the superior quality of his brain

Creative Thinking

Creative thinking is the ability to think constructively building up new ideas by the process of association of previously acquired ideas All our progressive ideas whether by intuition or inspiration result from such creative thinking This of course is different from the subjective creative thinking resulting from the fantasies of surrealistic visionaries

Scientists as a rule are predominantly objective thinkers because they build up their thoughts on empirical knowledge On the other hand philosophers poets artists and theologians are mostly subjective thinkers While the former is a realist, the latter is a fantast

What makes some people become visionaries and mystics? Biochemists neurologists and psychologists now know how mental derangements and deceptive perceptions are caused Deceptive perceptions are caused by illusions and hallucinations Illusions are wrong perceptions or sensory experiences Thus there are five types of illusions They are optical auditory olfactory lingual and tactile illusions

Biochemical upsets produced by imbalance of hormones vitamins and enzymes in the body can cause hallucinations Hallucinations are common symptoms of vitamin-deficiency diseases like beri beri pellagra and schizophrenia Hallucinations of sick people who are

in a delirious state, are wrongly interpreted by ignorants as the dying person's ability to see and converse with the "spirits" of dead relations

Hallucinations

When I went to my ancestral home in Kerala in 1942 just after my mother's death, my attention was drawn by my wife to the daily routine of numerous Christian women from our neighbourhood conducting prayers, with my elder brother's daughter Anne in the centre, in an out-house in our garden. When I asked my brother why these prayers were conducted daily, he told me that after my mother's death, his daughter Anne could see her grandmother being taken to heaven surrounded by numerous angels holding candle-lights whenever she looked upto the sky. The Christian women in the neighbourhood regarded Anne as a blessed girl to have the spiritual power to have the vision of her grandmother, the wife of the late Very Rev. Kovoor Eipe Thomma Kathanar the Vicar General of the Syrian Mar Thomma Church of Malabar, being taken to heaven by angels.

I warned my brother that if the practice was to continue long, his daughter might end up in a lunatic asylum. Though not a rationalist like me, my brother had high regard for my opinion. He stopped the prayer meeting from that day. I brought Anne with me to Sri Lanka and subjected her to a thorough medical check up. It was found that her parathyroid glands were not functioning properly. After a week of hormone treatment my mother and angels disappeared from the sky!

Had I not brought Anne with me to Sri Lanka and treated her, she would have had more hallucinations and "visions" according to the delusional beliefs in which she was brought up, and eventually she would have been canonised as St. Anne of Kerala, and there would have been millions to go on pilgrimage to my ancestral home to get her blessings, their problems solved and sickness healed. Today she is a happy grandmother because she was given proper treatment in time!

Hallucinations can also be induced psychologically through hypnotic suggestions Both autosuggestions and heterosuggestions can induce hypnotic hallucinations A person under heterohypnosis will have hallucinations according to the suggestions of the hypnotist If a Hindu or a Buddhist, who is brought up in the delusional belief in rebirth, is hypnotised and told that he is in his previous life he will come out with a role-play story of an imaginary previous life Similarly, if a person who is brought up in the Christian or Islamic belief of hell and heaven is hypnotised and told that he is in heaven, he will role play a vivid description of the heaven It is foolish to establish the truth or reality of a thing from the talk of a person under hypnosis, although such talks are of immense value to a psychiatrist

Glossolalia

Glossolalia, the neurosis of speaking in tongue is often seen at Pentecostal congregations, and at exorcistic cults in temples devales and churches They speak in fabricated sounds and words believing that a foreign language is being spoken by them

Once a medical doctor came to me by appointment During conversation he asked me whether I noticed anything abnormal in him On being asked why he asked me that question, he told me that after taking his medical degree from Ceylon he went to Mysore to practice under Dr Rao, a cardiologist of great repute "While at Mysore I got interested in yoga, and after six months of intensive yoga practice I got the ability to speak in any language", he said This statement alarmed me To test his claim I asked him to speak in Arabic He took a deep breath and gave a long speech in Arabic As I did not know Arabic I asked him to give me the meaning of what he spoke He gave the meaning in English I then asked him to give a speech in Hindi He gave a speech in Hindi too Although there were two or three Hindi words in his speech, I could not get any meaning out of his 'Hindi' speech Then I asked him to speak in Malayalam He gave a long speech in Malayalam also.

and gave its meaning in English In his 'Malayalam' speech there was not a single word of Malayalam my own mother tongue!

I had the unpleasant duty of telling him that he was a *victim of glossolalia This neurotic condition deve* loped in him as a result of his delusional belief that by practising yoga he could develop the miraculous power of speaking in tongues Dr F D Goodman of Denison University, Ohio, in her research paper on "Glossolalia in Pentecostal Congregations" says that the participants get into a temporary insane state of mind—a glossolalial bout—as a result of their blind belief that they could get possessed by the "Holy Ghost" by chanting the refrain "Praise the Lord" several times

Meditation and chanting of 'sacred **manthras** are slow processes of autohypnosis A lot of nonsense is spoken and believed about this primitive cult of inducing hallu cinations Numerous able bodied men and women in the "spiritualistic" East waste their time in yogic **asanas** and at meditation centres in the hope of atta ning "enlightenment", experiencing "heavenly bliss", "spiritual libera tion", "self-realisation", "god realisation', "state of awareness", etc

Transcendental Meditation

In recent years a new type of meditation known as *Transcendental Meditation (TM), propagated by one of* the numerous "godmen" of India Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, has gained favour with a large number of gulli bles especially among the drug addict escapists in Western countries

It was deplorable that a scientific body like the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science, of which I am ashamed to be a member, descended to the level of the credulous devotees of Mahesh Yogi, one of the numerous unemployed and unemployable graduates of India who have found it profitable to go to the Western countries in the garb of "gurus" for amassing wealth from the rich gullibles through false propaganda by profit-sharing collusive agents, to sponsor a lecture by

him on his fad "Transcendental Meditation and creative thinking".

Apart from the fact that yoga is a form of good physical exercise there is absolutely nothing miraculous about it. The tall claims of Hatha yogis, Raja yogis, Gnana yogis and Kundalini yogis that yogis over 300 years of age live in the Himalayas, they can eat glass and nails, drink poison, levitate in the air, leave their bodies and materialise in another, stop the heart-beat and breathing, walk on water, disappear from the negatives when photographed etc. are pure myths. Longevity of Indian yogis is not better than that of other Indians! Currently there is an attempt to make yoga and meditation appear "scientific". The Minister of Education in Sri Lanka is toying with the idea of introducing them into the school curriculum. Professor T. P. Meenakshisundaram, Vice-Chancellor of the Madura University, at a public meeting he addressed in Colombo recently expressed the hope that if even one per cent of the population resorted to transcendental meditation it would be beneficial for the whole humanity! What an absurd statement to come from an educationist!! Yes, we can afford to waste our time in meditation because there are industrious people in developed countries to work for us and feed us

Laboratory tests on yogis in meditation have shown marked changes in their physiological and neurological activities Lowering of pulse rates, blood pressure, blood lactates, abnormal rise of oxygen and carbon dioxide contents of the blood; and an abnormal pattern of alpha, beta, delta and theta waves of the brain are usually observed during transcendental meditation.

Some four decades back, my younger brother Dr. Behanan T. Kovoor of Yale University, measured the rate of oxygen consumption and respiratory volume to show the relationship between the psycho-physiological effects during pranayama. The effects of the different types of pranayama have been studied on the gas-exchange in the lungs and on the blood-gas composition. It has been found that the high concentration of carbon dioxide in the blood during pranayama can produce changes in the excitability of the nervous system. The unusual pattern

of the brain wave of a person in deep meditation clearly indicates the deranged state of his mind No sensible person, who has any knowledge of psychiatry, will accept this state of abnormality as a desirable thing Such unusual pattern of brain waves are common among schizophrenics

Many people talk about a feeling of well being after a session of meditation Such a feeling of euphoria is not uncommon when a person starts using alcohol or hallucinatory drugs like Ganja, LSD, marijuana, peyoti etc In 1963 the chief priest of Balaji Temple in Madras was arrested for possessing a large quantity of ganja This temple is famous among the Hindus of Tamil Nadu as a place where the devotees experience spiritual ecstasy during the Kavadi dance common at festival poojas During the trial at the Magistrate's court it transpired that this chief priest used to add ganja to the "prasadam" Prasadam is an ambrosia given to devotees at temples in return for their offerings This priest knew the technique of inducing "spiritual experience" among the devotees through ganja to part wtih bigger amounts as offerings

If "creative intelligence" and "enlightenment" can be had through meditation and yoga, the Minister of Education can very well scrap all the educational institutions in the country, and start establishing meditation centres all over the country!

In the book on "The Science and Philosophy of Kundalini Yoga" written by Dr V G Rele, with a foreword by no less a person than Sir John Woodroffe of Oxford we read about numerous supernatural powers a yogi can achieve Some such powers mentioned in that book are —

1 "A yogi can acquire powers of telepathy and clairvoyance His mind can be made both a transmitting as well as a receiving station."
2 "All forces of nature will obey a yogi as his slaves"
3 "A yogi can stop his heart at will"
4 "A yogi can materialise anything at any time"
5 "A yogi can get enlightened to know everything past, present and future"

6 "A yogi can transmute metals, acquire healing power, and see adepts moving in space He can travel in space'
7 'A yogi can purify his body from diseases and pains He can live in perpetual youth for thousands of years"
8 'A yogi can gain all types of psychic powers
9 'A yogi can discard his body and materialise in another place
10 "A yogi can become light in weight to levitate in the air or to walk on water"

There are millions of gullibles all over the world prepared to believe the above fictitious claims Vice-Chancellor Prof Meenakshisundaram appears to be one among them Wide spread belief that people can acquire supernatural powers through spiritual exercises like yogic meditation chanting of sacred mantras or by obtaining boons from non existing gods and demons has helped many charlatans earn their living by cheating credulous fools The numerous godmen of India belong to this group So also are all those who claim and practise fortune telling through astrology, palmistry numerology light reading card reading etc

Some two years ago a film actor of Kerala—Padmasri Prikkurisi—had the audacity to write in a film weekly—Chithrarama, the fictitious story that he had developed in his eighth year the miraculous powers to levitate in the air to walk on water etc through spiritual exercises He was bold enough to make this fraudulent claim because the majority of people are credulous enough to believe such fiction Nobody has and judging the past from the present I state boldly that nobody ever had miraculous or supernatural powers although we read about such claims in scriptures and sensation mongering newspapers Those who claim miraculous powers are either frauds or mentally deranged persons

He who does not allow his miracles to be investigated is a crook he who does not have the courage to investigate a miracle is a gullible, and he who is prepared to believe without verification is a fool! If there were a single person

with supernatural powers in any part of the world, I would have become a pauper long ago because I have offered an award of one lakh Sri Lanka rupees to any one who can demonstrate any one of the 23 items of miracles, mentioned in my permanent challenge, under fraud-proof conditions Though this open challenge was published all over the world some 15 years ago, I have not lost a single cent Instead I have gained a few thousands of rupees the forfeited earnest deposits of contestants who failed to turn up in the end

Psychokinesis

In 1973, on three Sundays (June 3 17) the Sunday Standard published three articles under the captions "The Amazing Power of Mind over Matter", "Has Science All the Answers" and "Swami with Scientific Mission" Mr S K Tripathi described one Swami Rama as a "scientific yogi" who had his education at the Oxford University, and presently engaged in preparing a "ten volume Encyclopaedia of Yoga". In that article it was said that Swami Rama cured cancer once by his healing power, and moved a bar of metal by his psychokinetic power

I challenged Swami Rama through the same paper to demonstrate his psychokinetic power under fraud proof conditions before me or my nominee, and that I would pay him my award of one lakh rupees if he succeeded There was no response!

"Bhu Samadhi"

In 1973, The Medical Journal of India published the report of an experiment conducted by Kothari, Bordia and Gupta of Rabindranath Medical College, Calcutta regarding the disappearance of the electric potentials of the heart in a yogi who stayed in a covered underground pit for eight days The heart stopped functioning on the second day and remained so till the last day upto about half an hour before the termination of the experiment

In a rejoinder published in several newspapers and magazines, I deplored a scientific journal publishing the result of a shoddy experiment conducted by three gullible doctors who had not the commonsense to repeat the same experiment with the yogi in a glass chamber of equal size as the underground chamber, and making sure that the yogi was not tampering with the connections to his body from the electro-cardiograph! I said that I would send three yards of rubber tape from Sri Lanka, and requested these three doctors to bandage the nose and mouth of the yogi with it. If the yogi could survive six minutes instead of six days, I would give the award of one lakh rupees to be shared by the three doctors and the yogi

Mystics and Gurus

When victims of hallucination happen to be illiterate and ignorant they are branded as insane, and nobody attaches any value when they talk about their subjective experiences They are often sent to lunatic asylums On the other hand, if the victims of hallucinations happen to be educated intellectuals they will be able to expatiate their hallucinations as instances of experiencing the "ultimate truth" or getting enlightened By their ability to speak and write convincingly rationalising their hallucinations as "spiritual experiences" they will be able to collect around them numerous credulous persons as disciples devotees and followers! Intellectual visionaries with academic qualifications are more dangerous to society than illiterate ones because the former can spread mental pollution unlike the latter! Books on physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, biology, engineering, anthropology, palaeontology, geology, astronomy, history, geography, architecture etc, are products of objective creative thinking of intelligent intellectuals On the other hand, fictional books like Aesop's Fables, Gulliver's Travels, Arabian Nights, Ramayana, Odyssey, Maha Bharatha the Bible and the Quraan etc, are products of surrealistic creative thinking of visionaries I may prefer the surrealistic paintings and sculptures of visionaries for decorating my draw-

ing room, but not their books for my library I shun them because most of them spread mental pollution!

Some of the greatest achievements of man in recent years are liberation of atomic energy radio telescopy to reach millions of light years in space, synthesis of molecules of livable matter, space flight, satellite communication, television, landing on the moon, heart transplant, electronic pace maker, heart and lung machine, artificial kidney, genetic engineering, blood transfusion, mechanical respirator etc All these marvelous achievements were made possible by the objective creative thinking of scientists No scriptures of any religion has contributed knowledge towards any scientific achievement of man so much so, no research laboratories stock scriptures in their reference libraries

Population Explosion

Religious leaders were largely responsible for high birth rates They advocate large families and severely condemn all forms of birth control currently dubbed as 'Family Planning" just to hoodwink religious protestors But, when hard times occurred and the poor went hungry, the religious leaders whose policies helped to create the situation, refused to admit any responsibility for it Now, with food shortages appearing all over the world, the developed countries of the West have found it necessary to break with the religious leaders by providing poor families, both in their own countries and the "developing" countries with b rth control information and contraceptives

But the worldwide food shortage continues to be extremely serious many are already dying of starvation and the number of victims is expected to reach many millions within the next few years Birth and death rates are highest in Eastern countries where illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and superstitions are greatest!

While population explosion is a potential danger to the whole world, it appears Bo tree explosion is going to be an added danger to the island of Sri Lanka! The front page article under the banner headline "GOOD OMEN

FOR COUNTRY S PROSPERITY" in the Daily News of April 27, 1978 says "Bo plants from the Sacred Sri Maha Bodhi, Anuradhapura, will be made available for planting throughout the island"

Unlike plants like jak, mango mangosteen, teak, rubber, coconut, palmyrah, tea, coffee, cinnamon etc, Bo tree (Ficus religiosa) is a useless plant Although Lord Buddha condemned idol worship in no uncertain terms this useless tree is worshipped as a sacred tree by millions in this country Not only the tree, but the place surrounding it also is regarded to be sacred By distributing this tree all over the island the whole of Sri Lanka is bound to become a forest of sacred Bo trees converting the country into a sacred island with no space for cultivation and building houses for the starving Sri Lankans of the future!!

Another alarming news comes from the Times group of newspapers "The 'SRI LANKADIPA' offers the Buddhist readers of the newspapers of the Times of Ceylon Ltd, an opportunity of making a two week pilgrimage to India free of charge"

Able bodied Sri Lankans can afford to waste their working hours for two weeks because there are workers in industrious countries to work and feed us through "economic aids" How correct Lord Fenner Brockway was when he said "We should put a stop to the undesirable practice of giving economic aid to the 'spiritualistic people of the so-called developing countries of the East"!

Chapter—3

TEACHING RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

While the All Sri Lanka Buddhist Congress and its President Dr G P Malalasekera are insistent that religion should be made a compulsory subject in Government schools it is necessary that the citizens of this country shoud have some idea of the amount of untruths and absurdities taught to small children in their impressionable ages in the name of religion

Kusa Jathakaya, Guttila Kaviya and **Ummagga Jathakaya** are three religious books prescribed by the Department of Education to be taught in our schools

Navel Conception

In 1962, a teacher at the Buddhist Ladies' College Colombo, was teaching **Kusa Jathakaya** to the girls in the J S C Class According to this famous Jathaka story, Buddha was born as Kusa in one of his various births He married a beautiful Princess Pabawathie, but had no children

Sakra, the King of gods, has a stone settee as his seat This is very comfortable like a feather cushion but it becomes terribly hot whenever some good person on earth is in trouble

Kusa was in trouble, and Sakra felt his bottom burning He contemplated a short while and decided that Kusa's wife should be given a child He came unnoticed by any one while Pabawathie was asleep and rubbed her navel with his toe This caused her to conceive

Out of the thirty girls in the class a twelve-year old girl got up and asked the teacher whether that was how a woman got a baby If the teacher had said no, then he would have had to tell her that the story was all bunkum Had he said yes he would have been guilty of telling the innocent child a lie Moreover, she and the

other g rls would have thereby taken their teacher's word, and believed that the navel and not the vagina, was the part to be protected at all costs!

Absurdities like the navel conception, virgin conception (mother of Jesus Christ) and oral conception (mother of Sri Rama) are the stuff taught in the name of religion in our schools!

Right and Wrong

Religionists insist on the teaching of religion on the ground that moral ty can be built only through religion Is there any truth in this contention? What is morality? What is 'right' and what is 'wrong'?

The Middle-East religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam — have established the peculiar notion that the basis of all morality is belief in some Almighty Disbelief in this supreme creator must therefore be regarded as the essence of immorality, consequently Rationalists and Buddhists who deny the existence of a creator can be classified as wicked and immoral

Thus, for the unthinking religionist his religion is the only source of morality An inquiry into the origins of the ideas of right and wrong will show that even the most primitive human races developed certain codes of conduct, first for the family, next for the clan and finally for the nation as a whole Going a step further back in evolution, we find that even among the animals there are to be found the rudiments of what we may call morals The study of the social behaviour in the animal kingdom reveals that even among very primitive creatures there can be found identical characteristics of what we might term as right and wrong Anyone who has had experience with horses and dogs, or even undomesticated animals must admit that the negative emotions such as envy, greed, jealousy, pride and many others are found in these animals, and likewise the emotions of love—especially mother love, sorrow, mutual aid and helpfulness and a feeling of protect on of the weak and the young are very outstanding in many animals either domesticated or in the wild state.

Social Instincts

Side by side with the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest there developed simultaneously the social instincts of the group Feelings such as mother love mutual assistance the sharing of food and shelter and the self sacrifice of the single individual for the welfare of the group must ultimately be regarded as the source out of which moral feeling originated That the human animal in its evolutionary journey developed identical qualities like other animals is only natural to assume

It is most logical to assume that the early human animal that lived in the trees and the caves developed identical social trends as did the bees the ants the baboons and many of the birds It is these animal characteristics from which originated later on the ideas of right and wrong or good and evil It is these feelings and instincts of sociability and self sacrifice for the common good which came to be transformed in the human kingdom into mutual benevolence sympathy and love They are in reality the origin of our human concepts of morality Morality is the mutual product of animal and human evolution and originated long before any organised religions had developed Thus it cannot be denied that the evolution of social and moral concepts had their beginnings in the experience of the animal kingdom and not from supernatural revelations as the religionists want us to believe

Rules of Behaviour

Mankind in their early stages had no organised religion but they developed the rules of moral behaviour; first for the family then the tribe and finally the nation Their beliefs were first in the 'spirits, then came idol worship and at last gods were invented During the tribal state the medicine man assumed more powers He posed as the intermediary between the imaginary gods and the common herd And as is the case even today god or gods were pictured as revengeful rulers demanding sacrifices penances and strict obedience of their subordinates It is only natural that fear of the unknown

and the unseen powers became the most prominent emotion of poor human beings.

Gradually, with the rise of organised religions the natural ideas of moral behaviour became distorted by priest-craft. The early moral feelings of love and sympathy for one's fellow human beings became subordinated to a 'love of god' as the first commandment. To appease the deity became the foremost duty. Special rules were invented by priest-craft for serving and placating the gods. This is how our great religions began. Special moral codes were formulated by the priests and enforced with threats of punishment and eternal damnation in imaginary hells or miserable re-incarnations. The breaking of these codes was called 'sin', meaning disobedience to the Creator.

Invention of Gods

Probably the greatest curse of mankind was the invention of the innumerable gods. Races and nations developed their own pantheons of gods. The consequence was a division of humanity into countless creeds and sects, perpetually warring with each other, each one pretending that its was the only true god and the only true way of salvation.

And the gods demanded sacrifices Not only animals were slaughtered as offerings to the gods but human beings, boys and virgin girls and prisoners of war were sacrificed on the altars of these gods. But, it might be argued, these were Pagan religions What about the present religions—Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam? Were they any better?

The Bible reveals cruelties perpetrated in the name of the god Jehovah. Jehovah himself ordered his chosen people to "go and smite Amalek and spare them not; but slay both men and women, infants and sucklings, ox and sheep, camel and ass; save alive nothing that breatheth."

Jehovah's Aberrations

According to god Jehovah women are mere chattels meant for the sexual gratification of men, and to be discarded, if and when they cease to give them satisfaction "And seest among the captives a beautiful women and thou hast a desire unto her, thou would take her to thee as *wife and after that thou shalt go in unto her and* be her husband and she shall be thy wife And it shall be that if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will" (Deuteronomy XXI—11 14)

At Jehovah's command the Israelites captured alive and brought home thirty-two thousand virgin women of whom 'the Lord's tribute was thirty two'

For what purpose the Creator wanted thirty two virgins? God Jehovah seems to be as sexy as god Krishna who feasted his eyes from the top of a tree peeping at the Gopi women bathing in the nude!

The *followers of Islam turned to war, conquest* and fanatical persecutions of so-called infidels even during the life time of Mohammed To accept the faith of the prophet or to die was the only choice left to the unfortunate who fell into their hands Even today Arabs and Israelis— brothers under the skin—are killing each other because their faiths differ

Christian History

The history of Christianity is well-known It gives sufficient proofs that did not uphold the commandments upon which it was founded Hardly had the new faith become established its followers began to make war on *those who held to other creeds Starting out to extin* guish the existing pagan religions, they proceeded to persecute every unbeliever or heretic The most indescribable cruelties were committed by the devout Christians to impose their faith The story of inquisition gives a *vivid picture of the horrible crimes perpetrated by the* supposed followers of Christ Men turned into beasts to maim to torture and to kill those who dared to disagree with the commandments of the priesthood, and such acts came to be regarded as *praiseworthy and pleasing* to the

Deity The bomber which carried the atom bomb to destroy the non-christian city, Hiroshima, was blessed by a Christian Priest before the take off!!!

In the sixteenth century the depravity of the Christian Church had reached its climax People revolted against the tyranny and immorality of their spiritual rulers Out of the struggle emerged new leaders and new, at least reformed creeds the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Baptists etc, each one of them pretending to be the true interpreter of the teachings of Chr st

Inhumanity to Men

How far did they practice these humanitarian ideals of the early Christian communities? The history of the reformation shows that those new creeds were hardly any better than their predecessor The Lutherans persecuted, slaughtered and burnt the Anabaptists, Calvin had his opponent, Servetus, burnt at the stake 'by slow fire' The puritans punished their dissenters by executing or exiling them into the wilderness It is said that when Quakers entered the Puritan domain they were hanged, whipped, branded or beaten senseless The story of the early colonies reveals a bitter religious hatred among the different religious sects

Even in our own time the most horrible inhumanity of man had been committed Protestants and Roman Catholics are killing each other in Belfast although they worship the same god The supposedly Christian German nation actually gassed millions of adherents of the Jewish faith

Where, we may ask, are the effects of religious morality? Admitted that there is warfare in the animal kingdom But it is limited mostly to the conflict between the different groups or species, so did the primitive tribes war against each other, but seldom did they attack one of their own groups But human beings, ever since they invented religions, have killed and mistreated their fellow human beings, and mostly for the simple reason that they worshipped different gods It is stated that two-third of all wars that humanity has fought were in the name of

religions During all the time when priest-craft dominated the life of the nations, there were wars, persecutions and suppressions of freedom

More Advanced Today

Yet we may admit that the vast majority of mankind are living today in a much more advanced condition, morally, socially and economically, than in any previous age The burning at the stake, the torture chamber and the casting into the den of lions and things of the past

To what cause should this progress be attributed? Certainly not to any one of the existing creeds or religions Religions at all times, did their best to keep human beings in ignorance, superstition and divided among themselves

The forerunners of the French Revolution, the great free thinkers and atheists like Holbach, La Mattrie, Descartes and Leibnitz in Europe, and Franklin, Jefferson Adams, Tom Paine and others in America, prepared the way for the new age, 'the Age of Reason', and laid the foundation for the "rights to freedom, equality and equa justice" for all

It was rationalistic and atheistic science and philosophy that inaugurated the age of Humanism with the new morality based on a real brotherhood of man, regardless of race, creed, colour or caste

Teaching of Ethics

The outstanding fact is that the improved moral conditions at the present era are not due to any religious creed, but due to the atheistic philosophy of the great leaders of this period It will be a tragedy, if we allow numerous Sundaralingams in this country to teach our school children the virtue of untouchability in the name of religious instruction!

Building character and morality in children through good example and teaching of ethics is much more desirable than through false threats of punishment in a dubious future life

The popular contention that children can be taught morality only through religion, or that children brought up without religion will turn to be immoral, is a canard As the father of a son who was brought up without even a trace of religion, I am in a position to refute this puerile argument empathatically This boy who was kept out of all religious instruction classes at my request is today a research professor with all the noble qualities of an intellectual atheist

Some Statistics

Frank Swankara the well known lawyer and author has made a research study about the relationship between crime and religion in various countries As a sample, I wish to give the statistics of just one country During the ten years in Sing Sing those executed for murder were 65% Roman Catholics, 26% Protestants, 6% Herbrews, 2% Pagans and less than one-third of one per cent non religious

Only a godless rationalist, Bertrand Russell, had the moral conscience to protest against America using chemical and gas warfare in Vietnam What were the popes, the cardinals bishops, monks and high priests doing when Russell conducted the International War Crimes Tribunal?

Chapter—4

PROMOTE MIXED MARRIAGES FOR SURVIVAL

Unlike most European countries, some of the newly independent Asian countries are faced with the artificial compartmentalization of their peoples diverse communities I say artificial, because no human child by birth belongs to any community formed on the basis of language, religion, caste, colour or wealth It is just born as a human child

Communal ideas are put into the mind of a growing child as the result of indoctrination by its elders It is wrong to designate a new-born child as a Sinhalese, Tamil, *Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Islam, Hindu, Gujarati,* Bengali or Malayalee Languages like Sinhala and Tamil, religions like Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, and castes like Goigama, Karawa, Salagama, Radala, Brahmin, Soodra etc, are put into the minds of children by their elders

A child born to a Sinhala Buddhist couple is neither a Sinhalese nor a Buddhist It is a human baby If such a baby is adopted from the time of its birth by a Tamil Hindu couple it will grow up to be a Tamil and a Hindu If he develops into a fanatically emotional type with exalted, yet false notion about the glory of his so-called ancestral language, religion and culture, he may even be prepared to sacrifice his life for safeguarding the interests of Tamil language and Hindu religion, while the real *language and religion of his parents are Sinhala and Buddhism* respectively

Let us for a moment think of a Sinhalese Buddhist mother and a Tamil Hindu mother entering a maternity hospital for confinement, and giving birth to two boys on the same day If by the carelessness of the attendants at the hospital, the babies get mixed up, it is quite possible that the two unsuspecting mothers would go home

taking with them babies which actually do not belong to them In the absence of any trace of suspicion in the parents' minds the boys will be brought up by the two women with all the maternal love and care The children too will reciprocate their affection to their false parents One boy will grow up as a Sinhalese Buddhist and the other as a Tamil Hindu, with all the emotional attachment to their so-called ancestral cultures As they grow up, and the time for their matrimony comes they as well as their false parents become extremely particular about the community to which the brides of their false children belong The false Sinhala Buddhist boy will eventually marry a genuine Sinhala Buddhist girl, and the false Tamil Hindu boy a genuine Tamil Hindu girl!

If communal tensions are artificially roused among the people by misguided leaders, as it happened in 1958 and 1977, it is quite possible that these two youths also will join the fanatics to commit arson and murder to defend their so-called ancestral culture But in reality are they doing these crimes in defence of their own ancestral religion and language?

It is thoroughly irrational to group people into communities My grandfather was a Christian who knew only one language—Malayalam My father was a Christian priest who knew five languages one of which was Malayalam I am not a Christian and I too know five languages, one of which is Malayalam My son who has no religion does not know Malayalam but he knows many European languages. My grandchildren have no religion and know only the French language. We are all Kovoors and belong to the same family My ancestors are no more.

It will be utter foolishness on my part to fight tooth and nail for the defence of the French language on the score that it is my grandchildren's language, or for the Malayalam language because my ancestors spoke it Should my grandchildren fight for the defence of English Sinhala or Tamil because their grandfather spoke those languages? I do not know to which community myself and my offspring belong My son and his children are not Malayalees as they do not know a word of that language.

devil-dancing to cure our ailments, and consulting astrologers, palmists and fortune tellers to solve our problems We may have to discard the fruits of modern sciences such as automobiles, trains, planes, radio T V, medical science etc Instead of going forward reaping the benefits of the scientific and technical knowledge of fellow human beings it will be utter foolishness to go back to our primitive life in the name of culture, reviving the witchcrafts, devil-dances, idolatory and relic worship of our forbears

Apart from some inherited instinctive traits, the human baby is born with a vacant mind possessing no knowledge of anything The brain of a newborn baby is similar to a new money-purse we buy from a shop with no money in it Unless we put money into it we will not be able to take money from it. If by any chance we put dud coins into it those dud ones are sure to come out of it later Similarly, unless we put knowledge into the mind of a growing child, no knowledge will come out of the child's mind in later life The mind of the child is filled with knowledge required through the five senses of sight hearing tasting smelling and feeling. Unlike the purse which gets empty when we pull out money from it, the mind containing knowledge will not get empty as knowledge is pulled out of it It gets more and more filled up even during the process of emptying It loses its contents only when some damage occurs to the brain tissue

Like the dud coins in the purse the mind of the growing child can get filled by wrong type of knowledge Elders are mostly responsible for filling the minds of children with wrong and harmful ideas Some of the superstitious ideas thrust into the minds of innocent children by foolish elders are the beliefs in ghosts gods, demons devils, satan angels charm astrology palmistry, oracles omens auspicious times curse spells heaven, hell rebirth etc

The worst malady which has affected the Ceylonese nation as in most other Eastern countries is the artificial isolation of its citizens into communities according to their languages, religions castes and wealth Like other superstitious beliefs, communalism too is thrust into

the minds of children as a result of indoctrination by elders It is a tragic thing that some political leaders in this country are engaged in brainwashing the masses in communal fanaticism

A few days ago a ten-year-old girl was brought to me for psychiatric treatment for enuresis (wetting the bed in sleep) On analysis I was shocked to find that she never joined the other girls in her class of forty students, even at games, because they all belonged to a caste lower than that of hers While talking about the other girls in her class she spoke in very contemptuous terms. How did this girl develop this caste hatred? Surely she was not born with any instinctive hatred for the children of other castes Even if this girl was born to low-caste parents, but adopted from babyhood by the high-caste couple still her behaviour towards the other children — who are in reality her own type — would have been snobbish aloofness because of her upbringing

All patriotic men of sound thinking will agree that the future progress of all caste-ridden countries depends on the fraternal feel ng among its citizens This can be achieved only when we realize that all of us are born into this world as human beings, and that all communal differences are artificial or man made This idea of fraternity cannot be put all of a sudden into the minds of people who had been isolated into communal camps for ages It has to be brought about by a process of national integration planned on a long term basis

Complete national integration can be brought about during the course of a quarter or half century by promoting mixed marriages between men and women belonging to different communities Children born to such couples need not necessarily develop sentimental attachment to either of the two communities When more and more of the future children of Ceylon are born to such mixed couples, they will grow up as citizens of the country without any communal affiliations, The loyalty of such children will naturally be to the country, and not to the communities to which their parents once belonged

Promotion of mixed marriages is as important to the future prosperity of the people as the Family Plan-

ning programme, because communal strifes and increasing population are the two grave menaces threatening the future of Eastern nations Communalism can be exterminated totally only by inter marriages Unless there is mixing of blood between the various communities, it is not possible to build up a single nation.

How can an integration of this type be achieved in a country where mixed marriages are looked upon by society as a shocking and unsocial act? It is indeed a healthy sign that, in spite of social and family ostracisms, there are more and more mixed marriages taking place in recent years It is the duty of patriotic statesmen to evolve ways and means to promote intermarriages

There is the need for establishing Inter marriage Associations These associations should undertake to conduct under their patronage weddings of mixed couples who seek such assistance, in public halls At these secular weddings national leaders should be given opportunities to speak about the need and advantages of mixed marriages When society starts giving importance and recognition to inter lingual, inter religious, and inter caste marriages, there will be more and more young men and women wanting to enter into mixed wedlock

The Government too is in duty bound to come forward to promote national integration through intermarriages Other qualifications being equal preference should be given to the children of inter married parents for employment

In countries like ours where there are numerous religions languages and castes, true democracy can work only when the Government becomes fully secular Religion should be left as a private affair of the individual The undemocratic practice of collecting taxes from all religionists and spending them on the religion of the majority, can cause communal bitterness Information about community, religion etc should not be asked from applicants wanting to join Government service or schools

Any suggestion to deviate from prevailing social customs may be found repulsive to the stagnating conservatives in the country, This vitally important progressive

reform is bound to meet with stiff opposition from certain types whose field of mental vision is limited But let us hope that *there will be at least a few who will see a ray* of hope in inter-marriages for the future unity of the nation After all, the progress of any country depends on the thinking few rather than on the ignorant many. Let us all be human beings (Homo sapiens) first and last

Chapter—5

CHURCH AND FAMILY PLANNING

Sex is only a biological function like all other functions of the body. Since it is connected with the propagation of the species, sex is not only a personal need, but also a social one.

It is a well-recognised biological fact that the female of the species in all animals, including humans, have maximum desire for sex during their ovulation periods. This is biologically known as the "rut", and popularly as the period when the female is in "heat". In the case of animals their females have one or two ovulation periods or rut seasons in a year, and they go all out to satisfy their sex urge when they are in heat. But in the case of women there is one ovulation period during each of the 28-day menstrual cycles. They too have their maximum sex desires during their ruts which synchronise with their ovulation periods lasting for 3 or 4 days in the middle of each menstrual cycle. Unlike men who have no such sex cycles, women's sex desires fluctuate rhythmically during the menstrual cycle. Although women have maximum sex desires during their ruts, they do not run after men during these periods as a result of social taboos and inhibitions.

The Roman Catholic hierarchy, without any knowledge of this biological phenomenon, has adviced the lay members of the church, who wish to limit the number of children in the family, to desist from sexual intercourse during the ovulation periods of their wives. Their men are permitted to satisfy their sex desires during the non-ovulation periods of their wives, when they do not need it and want it, and deny them satisfaction when they need it most! Of course, every Roman Catholic wife will submit to her husband's amorous approach despite her dislike, because she was compelled to make a solemn

promise to "obey" her husband at the time of her wedding

Since sexual assault on a woman against her wish is rape, I am of the opinion that the Roman Catholic Church is encouraging their male members to commit legalised rape on their wives! Just because their marriages are made in heaven', Roman Catholic couples have to obey the dictates of the Holy Father, the earthly representative of the heavenly God This type of unnatural sex lives of Roman Catholics result in their women becoming frigid in the long run

As a marriage guidance counsellor I have come across numerous catholic husbands complaining about the frigidity and incompatibility of their wives If the church allows the use of contraceptives like the members of other religions the Roman Catholic women too could enjoy sex during their ovulation periods when their sex urge is at its peak, and lead a happy married life

To prove the harmful effect of the unnatural "rhythm method' I wish to cite a specific case I had to counsel not long ago

The young man and his girl met and fell in love while they were students at the University of Sri Lanka at Peradeniya The girl was a Methodist Christian — daughter of a Colombo lawyer, and the boy a Roman Catholic from Panadura Much against the wishes of their parents they got married after both of them got employed The boy became an executive in one of the leading firms in Colombo and the girl a teacher in their old school They lived happily together till the birth of their second child By this time the husband became the managing director of his firm and the wife the vice-principal of her school

Though the husband was still fond of his wife and the two children he started coming home from office very late and on certain days even after midnight. The stock excuse was either pressure of work or Board meetings

Finally the wife came to know that her husband was taking his private secretary, a young miniskirted girl to hotels and tourist homes after office hours Cracks began to appear in the matrimonial edifice The wife sought

the assistance of the Marriage Guidance Centre of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association, of which I am the chief counsellor

During the confidential counselling the husband confessed that he had taken two other women also out in the evenings because, according to him, "though my wife is still fond of me, she has lost all her interest in sex after the birth of my second child"

Further counselling revealed that after the birth of their second child the couple decided to have no more children. Being an ardent catholic he strictly adhered to the "rhythm method" The wife who was very enthusiastic about sex in the past, began to show signs of apathy during sexual intercourse This eventually led the husband to seek satisfaction elsewhere

I was successful in convincing the husband of the folly and dangers of the rhythm method of family planning He was made to understand the biological aspect involved in it, and the value of mating with his wife during her ovulation periods He was told that even domestic dogs and bulls do not attempt to have sex with bitches and cows when they are not in "heat"

Today this couple is once again living happily together because they have started using contraceptives like non-catholics!

Holy Father and Compulsory Sterilisation

Cardinal Gracias says the Catholic Church is opposed to contraception or artificial means of birth control and much more, to any practice of abortion for the sake of limiting or regulating population because they "go against the plan of God and his Holy will"

These church leaders seem to forget the fact that man has always been going against nature—the plan of God—to better his lot Every time he seeks medical help he is trying to defeat his "creator" who has made him sick as a punishment for his "sins"

It is the duty of every welfare State not only to control the quantity, but also to improve the quality of its future citizens When we are keen on improving the

quality of our domesticated animals and cultivated plants by selective breeding, we are not at all concerned about the quality of our future generation It is foolish to produce mediocre citizens by allowing misfits to procreate on the ground that the State should not interfere in 'God's plan"

While we are very keen about the quality of the sires and dames for breeding our dogs, cattle and poultry, we are only keen about the horoscopes of the sires and dames of our future children It is high time we discarded the foolish method of selecting brides and bridegrooms according to horoscopes, caste, dowry etc

Whether the Holy Father likes it or not, the day is not far for human procreation in progressive countries to come under the control of a Minister of the State for Procreation! While every adult will have the freedom to select his or her own "partner in life" for sexual needs, they will have to obtain special permits from the "Ministry of Procreation" if they intend to have children To obtain such permits they will have to produce fitness certificates from approved doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc, and not from astrologers, palmists and parish priests! Misfits will be sterilized before they are issued licences to marry

Artificial insemination, genetic engineering, cloning, etc., are bound to become commonplace practices in human procreation Like blood banks, there will be semen banks preserving sperms of men of outstanding physical and mental qualities for inseminating women possessing similar qualities It might even become legal and legitimate for wives to impregnate themselves with specially selected sperms from semen banks The State will provide medical help to any woman to get rid of an unwanted foetus from her body just like getting rid of an unwanted internal parasite Only wanted children will be allowed to be born

Of course, there will be vehement protests from the Holy Father and his Cardinals saying that they are "violations of the liberty and dignity of married couples", but the caravan of the State will go on!!

Chapter—6

PSI PHENOMENA — A MYTH

In an article on Shri Aurobindo Ghosh in the journal of the Aurobindo Society of Sri Lanka Dr A Kanaga ratnam describes in glorious terms the parapsychic faculties of Shri Aurobindo As an example of Aurobindo's power of precognition Dr Kanagaratnam has written thus —

> On the 15th August 1946 the writer was at Pondicherry to have a 'darsan' of Shri Aurobindo and also in order to obtain for himself confirmation of certain spiritual experiences he had in relation to Shri Aurobindo There were about a thousand people from different parts of the world lined up in a queue At the entrance there was placed a glass-covered board framed like a picture containing within it a written statement stitched over in gold thread This is what it contained 'On this day next year 15th August 1947 India will gain her independence" — Aurobindo
> The writer came back wondering if such a prediction could be made by a person with any sense in him In August 1946 it was wishful thinking for anybody to imagine India getting her independence the following year and to make a bold prophesy as to the precise date of such independence was to say the least something queer

As one who had come to the conclusion after over half a century of investigations into the claims of psychic and parapsychic powers of 'gifted' persons that nobody has and judging the past from the present, nobody ever had supernatural powers I decided to verify the truth about the above story about Shri Aurobindo's power of precognition All my efforts for two years to find another person either in India or Sri Lanka to corroborate this story failed

Mr M P Pandit the General Secretary of the Aurobindo Ashram makes periodic visits to Sri Lanka to spread mental pollution among the people through public lectures on his delusional beliefs In January 1978, after his lecture at a meeting sponsored by the Theosoph cal Society of Sri Lanka, I asked him whether he or anybody else at the Aurobindo ashram had seen such a prediction displayed at the entrance to the ashram Though he was reluctant to give me a straightforward answer, under pressure to say 'yes' or 'no' to my question Mr Pandit accepted that he had not seen such a prediction and qualified his answer by adding that it was possible for the writer to have seen it with his mental eyes. Although the writer of that article was seated next to me I had the unpleasant task of saying that if it was so that writer should be sent to a mental hospital for psychiatric treat ment

This type of fictitious stories about telepathy clair voyance, precognition, retrocognition psychokinesis, tele porting materialising levitating transmigrating etc, could be seen in scriptures and sensation mongering journals I started writing and speaking about the fruits of my researches on psychic and parapsychic phenomena only after my retirement from service in 1959 When I found that what I wrote was opposed by others quoting *investigators better qualified than me I decided that only* direct challenges could convince gullible believers Thus I issued my world famous permanent challenge offering an award of ONE LAKH rupees to anyone who could demonstrate supernatural powers under fraud proof con ditions

Uri Geller's Claims

In recent years Uri Geller, the sleight-of hand juggler of Israel took the world by storm with his psychic feats of bending spoons, keys and nails teleporting thousands *of miles in seconds, taking photographs through sealed* lens caps reproducing drawings that have been sealed up in envelopes, entering a flying saucer etc

Just as a sleight of hand trickster Sathyanarayana Raju of Puttaparti was made into a miracle-performing God

by the crafty Prof Kasthuri writing a fictitious biography of his claiming that he is an "avathar" of god, the night club performer Uri Geller of Israel was made into a 'psychic' by the crafty Dr Andrija Puharich of New York writing a voluminous biography of Uri with a lot of cock-and-bull stories of miracles he performed as a young boy. In the book **Uri** Dr Puharich says that Uri Geller gets psychic powers from "computerised minds millions of light years away from the earth"

Geller succeeded in hoodwinking Johnny Garsaon, Time and Scientific American magazines, Barbera Walters of the NBC, and several eminent scientists like Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ of the Stanford Research Institute, Astronaut Edgar Mitchell, Prof John Taylor, **et al.** His "psychic" feats televised by the NBC gave an impetus to ESP faddists all over the world But Uri Geller's fame as a psychic remained only till the publication of the book **The Magic of Uri Geller** by James Randi In a complimentary copy of his book Randi has autographed thus —

> To Dr Kovoor — I trust that your fight against the irrational will continue to be successful — and I am pleased to know that you care enough to fight — Randi

The highest paid woman journalist of the world, Barbera Walters, who was responsible for televising to the world Uri Geller's so-called psychic feats, interviewed me on December 15, 1975 at my residence "Tiruvalla" in Colombo This interview resulted from my open challenge to Uri Geller offering him an award of $16,000 if he could perform any of his 'psychic' feats under fraud-proof conditions before me or my nominee in America, the Nobel Prize winner Prof Hannes Alfven of California University Uri Geller's refusal to accept my challenge made Barbera Walters make a trip to Sri Lanka to interview me During that interview I showed her and her secretary several of Uri Geller's 'psychic' feats and Sathya Sai Baba's miracles With astonishment Barbera told me that I could make millions of dollars if I could go with her to America and perform some of my tricks

provided I am prepared to claim spiritual powers "You may even get several rich gullibles as your devotees or disciples", said she!

Paranoid writers like Patanjali of old (300 B C) and Aurobindo, Kuvayalanda, Dr Vasanth Rele Sir John Woodroffe, Swami Rama, P Karambelkar, T Brosse, M Bhole, M Gharote, R E Ornstein, M. P Pandit, et al, in recent years were responsible for spreading false beliefs among the masses that man can acquire psychic, para-psychic and mystic powers through manthra, tantra, yoga and meditation.

Meditation and Yoga

It is true that persons in deep meditation, with or without rhythmic chanting of mantric refrains can have abnormal mental experiences Such experiences can be induced by consuming hallucinogens like Ganja LSD, Peyoti Opium etc, as well as by auto or hetero hypnosis Although there are scientific explanations for abnormal experiences derived through drugs (chemical causes), rhythmical stimulation of the nervous system (physical stimuli), Hormone and vitamin imbalance (biochemical causes) and meditation (auto hypnosis) they are mistakenly interpreted by gullibles as attaining enlightenment, experiencing "self realisation", "cosmic conscience", knowing the "ultimate truth", "self liberation", to say only a few such spiritual blah blah

The rich lunatic fringe in Western countries who are mostly drug addicts become devotees of crafty Indians who go to Western countries in the garb of Gurus to spread the cults of yoga and transcendental meditation because they get the same thrill or 'kick' as they used to get by using prohibited drugs

Exponents of yoga cults foolishly claim that PSI phenomena involving extrasensory perception (ESP) can be acquired through yogic meditations There are several misguided "researchers" who have "discovered" that even plants have psychic powers They claim that plants respond to prayers and music (V Sampath of Kodaikanal, Dr T C V Singh of the University of Annamalai), and

that they have telepathic and clairvoyant powers (Cleve Backster of New York).

The luminous halo seen round the photographs of objects taken according to Kirlian technique is interpreted by spiritualists as "scientific evidence" for the existence of souls For believers in "faith healing" the luminous aura round the Kirlian photographs of the fingers of the "psychic healers" provides evidence of the "healing power radiating from their finger tips". According to spiritualists the luminous halo is that of the 'astral body" or "bio-plasma". The fact that Kirlian photographs of inanimate objects also have the luminous aura round them clearly shows that it has nothing to do with spirit or healing!

Extra-Sensory Perception

The pseudoscience of parapsychology became respectable enough to be seriously researched on in many universities with the publication of J. B. Rhine's mind polluting books **New Frontiers of Mind, The Reach of Mind, Extra-Sensory Perception, My Thirty Years of Physical Research, Telepathy and Human Personality** and his numerous articles in the **Journal of Parapsychology.**

In 1927 Dr. J. B. Rhine, a biologist, in collaboration with his wife Dr. Lousia E. Rhine and Dr. Helge Lindholm conducted some research at Duke University, North Carolina, under the world renowned psychologist Professor William McDougall on ESP. Later Dr. Rhine became the Director of the Department of Parapsychology at Duke University.

Stimulated by Dr. Rhine's experimental claims several universities and individual scientists in America, Europe and even in India conducted researches in parapsychology. Before long Rhine got ardent supporters in noted scientists like Whately Carington, S G. Soal, G. N. M Tyrell, R. H. Thouless, N. V. Peale, J. W. Dunne, Ian Stevenson, B. Wiesner, C. D Broad, Leonid Vasiliev, **et al.** *Their sensational claims created a big stir among* scientists all over the world, and it induced many more scientists to take up research in ESP.

Humanity is indebted to the findings of ESP researchers like Dr Eugene Adams Dr G R Price Prof Kennedy, Dr John E Coover Dr Christopher Evans Dr Christopher Scott Dr Dennis Hyde Dr Denys Parsons, Dr Helmholtz Prof Scarne Dr E Roux Dr Anita Kohsem Prof Antony Flew and numerous others who have severely condemned and even challenged the findings of Rhine and other defenders of PSI phenomena I give below the findings of some of the contemporary *researchers in ESP* —

> Dr Christopher Scott Dr Rhine's techniques are riddled with loopholes the striking positive results must be discounted completely (Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research Vol XLIX)
>
> Dr Denys Parsons A mechanical device for investigating ESP under conditions of telepathy and clairvoyance has been devised No evidence of ESP was found in 24 000 trials (Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol XLVIII)
>
> Dr Dennis Hyde Duke University experiments were repeated but succeeded only in detecting a hitherto unnoticed source of error (Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol XLVIII)
>
> Dr Margaret Knight The facts revealed by J B Rhine are so odd, so apparently chaotic, in a sense trivial and yet so trivial to organise with the accepted scientific framework (Science News, No 18)
>
> Dr H Helmholtz Neither the testimony of all the Fellows of the Royal Society, nor even the evidence of my own senses will lead me to believe in the transmission of thought from one person to another, independently of the recognised channels of sensation (**The Logic of Liberty.**)
>
> Dr E Roux When such 'paranormal' persons discovered by an investigator were subsequently tested by other investigators, they almost always failed to produce anything unusual With the new fangled ESP go all other and older marvels of the seance the rapping tables The so-called PSI

phenomena are anecdotal, not scientific (**The Case Against Parapsychology.**)

G. L. Simsons The study of telepathy can rightly belong to science Perhaps it is significant to note that to date their results appear to be negative Rhine and his colleagues at Duke University—from whom we hear very little nowadays—will be the first to admit this (Psychical Research and Secularism **Freethinker,** Jan 1964)

C E M Hansel Collusion between the subject and the agent might result in just the kind of results obtained in Soal's experiments, and this collusion might deceive the experimenter who did not realise how the trick was done (**New Scientist,** Feb 1959)

Dr Anita Kohsen Dr J B Rhine whose writings, in my opinion, are entirely devoid of either scientific or scholastic merit (**New Approach to Psychical Research.**)

Collin McCall Dr Rhine was hopelessly unscientific We cannot take a word of Professor Vasiliev, however distinguished a physiologist, any more than we can take the word of Professor Rhine In dealing with accounts of ESP we are dealing with human testimony and often with human gullibility Telepathy is contrary to scientifically-established laws (**Freethinker,** Oct 11th 1963)

Dr Garry de Young Rhine is a charlatan of the first order He has been completely exposed by Dr Abraham T. Kovoor, President of the Rationalist Association of Ceylon (**Humanist** in Canada)

Prof Antony Flew This book indicates that ESP tests by a really competent, conscientious sceptical researcher will only yield negative results ESP guessing is so different from the operation of legitimate senses, that it should not be thought of as a species of perception at all It is ludicrously unreliable The precognitive effects surely rule out the possibility of explanation in terms of radiation Mediumistic talk of "the vibration", waves and so

on, is simply mystification. Still we cannot say that even the most significant results prove ESP Most scandalous of all, precognition conflicts with our scientific assurance that what will happen later cannot affect what happens now It makes no sense to talk of future causes having present effects (New **Approach to Psychical Research.)**

Dr. Eugene Adams. I have completed a series of 30,000 individual tests of the card guessing sort that Dr. Rhine has conducted at Duke University. My tests were designed to test clairvoyance, telepathy and the two in combination. My results were negative. **The Amazing World.)**

Dr. G. R. Price. Dr. Rhine's so-called psychic experiments have to be condemned severely. (Science, Aug. 25th, 1955.)

Dr. John E. Coover: After 10,000 tests I obtained no better than change results No trace of any objective thought-transmission was found. **(Experiments in Psychic Research, Oxford University.)**

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Dr G R. Price Dr Rhine s so-called psychic experiments have to be condemned severely (**Science**, Aug 25th 1955)

Dr John E Coover After 10 000 tests I obtained no better than change results No trace of any objective thought transmission was found (**Experiments in Psychic Research, Oxford University**)

Prof John Scarne All the evidences submitted by Rhine designed to prove the existence of psychic phenomena is a lot of humbug It is an established fact that at one time or another every prominent psychic researcher had been duped by falling for some amateurish trick performed by a trickster operating under the guise of being psychic Rhine s ESP and psychokinesis are nothing but errors Let us stop kidding others If Rhine had one subject who possessed extrasensory perception he and/or that subject could win an enormous fortune in short time (**The Amazing World**)

Prof Kennedy of Stanford University One of the scientific demands on truth is that when experiments are repeated in laboratories results similar to the original shall be obained One hundred students were used in our experiments, and our results did not correspond to those of Dr Rhine (**The Amazing World.**)

Thodore Besterman: We conducted three series of experiments: first with a group of SPR members; second with a group of Oxford undergraduates; third with Mr. Dunne himself. The results were unimpressive. **(A New Approach To Psychical Research.)**

C. W. K. Mundle: The fact that in precognitive phenomena the nature of the earlier event seems to be causally dependent on that of the later event, makes it tautological...In order to explain precognition it seems necessary to suppose that they are due to causal influence by future events. I am extremely reluctant to accept it. To accept this would be to raise the conception of cause and effect. **(A New Approach to Psychical Research.)**

Submarine Telepathy

On September 17, 1963 the **Daily Sketch** (London) carried an article by one Lessly Mallory under the caption New Science Backs The Mind Reader, dealing with the claims of the Russian Professor Leonid Vasiliev, who regularly, "put men and women to sleep by telepathy and awakened them at set intervals." But the Professor, we are told, "links these with the one carried on in the U.S. Nuclear submarine Nautilus." A similar article appeared in **PSYCHOLOGY** magazine (London). The story went on thus:—

It was in July 25th, 1959, that a mysterious passenger boarded the Nautilus, which immediately put to sea and cruised for 16 days in the depths of the Atlantic ocean. Once aboard, the passenger sat in a cabin, and only the sailor who brought him his food, and Captain Anderson had ever seen his face Twice a day the passenger handed a slip of paper to Captain Anderson, bearing the typical zeror card symbols used in Rhine's experiments in ESP. Both passenger and the Captain signed each slip, the Captain then placed it in an envelope which was closed and officially sealed with the date and the words: "Top secret, to be destroyed in case of imminent capture." It was then locked up in the safe

During the 16 days the experiment lasted, closed up in a room which he never left, Smith, a student at Duke University—the university immortalised by the doyen of ESP experiments, Professor Joseph Banks Rhine—would sit twice a day before an automatic card shuffling device In a drum thousands of zenor cards were shaken up Twice a day the apparatus, operated by a clockwork, would eject a card, completely at random, at one minute intervals Experimenter Smith fixed his gaze and tried to concentrate intensely on this card

Precisely at the same moment, 1200 miles away and hundreds of feet under the ocean, the mysterious passenger—Lieutenant Jones—tried to guess which card Smith was looking at He marked down the result and had the document, countersigned by Captain Anderson

On Monday, August 10th, 1959, the submarine landed at Croyton, and Lieutenant Jones entered an official car which, under military escort, let him off at the nearest airport(?) A few hours later his plane landed in a town in Maryland An automobile was standing by to pick up the passenger It drove him to a building which bore the inscription "Westinghouse Special Research Center"

The passenger asked for Colonel William Bowers, Director of Biological Science at the USAF Research Office

Colonel was waiting in the office "Sit down Lieutenent Jones", he said, "You have the envelop? Jones handed over the envelop identical except that the seal it bore was not marked "submarine" but Research Center X, Friendship, Maryland

Colonel Bowers opened the two envelopes and took out some packets of smaller envelopes, which he proceeded to unseal Silently the two men matched the slips of paper that bore similar dates Then they compared them With more than 70 per cent accuracy, the symbols not only corresponded, but were placed in the same order on the two sheets bearing the same date

> We have reached a turning point in history", said Colonel Bowers, "For the first time ever, under conditions that precluded trickery, and a precision great enough to open the way to its practical application, human thought has been transmitted through space, without any intermediary, from one brain to another It has opened the way even for submarine communication.

I read this widely publicised story first in a French best seller, **LE MARTIN DES MAGICIENS,** by Louis Pouwels and Jacques Bergis. It was later summarised in the American Magazine **THIS WEEK.** Instead of taking the story on its face value, as Mr. Mallory and a number of English journalists have done, **This Week** did a little private detective work.

When asked for proof of the story for which they had been the main source, Messers Pouwels and Bergier told **THIS WEEK** that they had "elaborated" on reports they had heard but not verified. They had for example given the submarine a name. "It could not be just an atomic submarine", wrote Pouwels in response to **THIS WEEK'S** questions, "but the **Nautilus** is best known to French People."

This Week next showed the story to Captain William R Anderson, first skipper of **Nautilus,** and now retired from the U S. Navy. His comment was thus:—

> Although the **Nautilus** was engaged in a wide variety of activities, certainly these did not include experiments in telepathy. The report of Pouwels and Bergier is completely false...During that time **Nautilus** was in fact high and dry in dock at Portsmouth undergoing her first major overhaul.

It is still more interesting to note that during the relevant period the submarine **Nautilus** was not under the command of Captain Anderson, but Commander Lando W. Zech, Jr. Colonel William Bowers of the U.S Airforce, whose participation in the experiment, and whole remarks about "the turning point of history" are mentioned in the story declared :—

> The experiment in which I was alleged to have participated never took place I have never been assigned to the Westinghouse laboratory *In fact on July* 25th 1959, I was assigned to duties in the Air University, Maxwell AFB, Alabama which were in no way related to extrasensory investigations

In short, this story of submarine telepathy claimed to have been conducted by Rhine's Parapsychology Department of Duke University was as big a hoax exactly like *Dr Kanagaratnam's story of Shri Aurobindo's power of* precognition!

Encyclopaedia Britannica

The latest edition of the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** has *come out with crushing criticism of ESP This symposium* of human knowledge devotes about six sections *lime-lighting the errors in ESP tests The following six* points from the Encyclopaedia Britannica are worth noting —

1 *It can be anticipated that fraud will remain an* issue until replication of reported findings become common.
2 With the seperation of Rhine's parapsychology laboratory from *Duke University*, no new high-scoring subjects have been reported
3 The great majority of U S Psychiatrists do not accept psychic phenomena as a fact
4 Within the parapsychological movement itself criteria *for establishing the validity of paranormal* phenomena are in dispute
5 Many scientists remain unimpressed by, and are even scornful of, the statistical methodology of parapsychology
6 Subliminal sensory stimuli appear to have been responsible for some of the so-called significant scores in telepathy and clairvoyance experiments *These defects persisted for many years after the* early reports in 1930

These points from the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** show what eminent scientists of today think about ESP and parapsychology!

Fraud

J. B. Rhine had spent a large chunk of his time at Parapsychology Department at Duke University, trying to make parapsychology sufficiently respectable. There were too many doubters, too many demands for a scientific regimen. But gradually he was able to win over even such hardened cynics as C. S. Soal of Queen Mary College in London. Duke University disbanded its parapsychology unit, and discontinued Rhine's researches.

Rhine started again establishing the Institute for Parapsychology at Durham, North Carolina. Then in August 1974, came the thunder clap. Walter Levy, the Director of the Institute, had falsified experimental data. Levy had been reporting 54 per cent scores, until some of his colleagues became suspicious. Levy seemed to be loitering needlessly around the equipment! From a hiding place they saw him tamper with the recording machine, and later when they repeated the tests, the scores remained at the mundane 50 per cent. Confronted, Levy admitted the fraud, leaving parapsychology and Rhine once again in the doldrum of doubt.

Why do scientists cheat? Because of a chink in their moral armour? Or, is it for publicity? In his defence Walter Levy had put the blame on 'pressure, too much pressure to show results'. (**Science Today**, November 1974).

Chapter—7

BHAGAWANS AND BHAGAWATHIES GALORE!

Since independence India has become a fertile ground for the unchecked growth of religious hoaxers Though cheating is a criminal offence, it appears that it becomes *legal when practised in the name of religion! Since* the secular constitution of India provides "religious freedom" crafty men and women, in priestly garb, are at full liberty to carry on their nefarious hoaxes Moreover, they can boldly carry on their cheating because of the natural disinclination of the credulous masses to doubt or to investigate religious matters for fear of divine wrath and curse!

These religious charlatans attract to themselves foolish devotees by thousands, not only in India, but also in foreign countries To such gullibles these hoaxers are *Bhagawans (God incarnate) or Sidhhas who* have obtained supernatural powers from God through penance and transcendental meditation Some of these 'Bhagawans" *make periodical visits to Ceylon at the invitation of* their local devotees

Sri Sivabalayogi Maharaj of Bangalore disembarked recently, topless and bottomless exposing his feminine-sized mammaries and belly at the Bandaranaike International Airport He was received with due homage and devotion by his local devotees As one who had attained Siddhahood he was privileged to appear in public virtually naked, without fear of being arrested for indecent exposure!

The story of how this man attained Siddhahood was described by the **Ceylon Daily Mirror** as follows —

> Sathya Raju was his name He was only twelve years old when life took a different turn He was returning after a bath through a palmyrah grove when two fruits fell at his feet The little boy picked up one to eat It suddenly split open and a 'lingam" (Lord

Siva's 'phallus' appeared. In a matter of a few seconds the "lingam" turned into a 6 ft. man who commanded Sathya Raju to sit down. Sathya Raju sat down and the man preached to him, and asked him to do penance.

For twelve years the little boy lived a life of prayer and penance, and when he was ready, he gave himself back to the world as Sri Sivabalayogi Maharaj, to preach and serve his fellow beings

It is rather strange that there are fools prepared to believe this type of fantastic and fictitious stories without verification!

During one of the "darsans" he gave to his devotees this Bhagawan was seated cross-legged for a long time. According to one of the devotees present on the occasion, the "Bhagawan" found it difficult to get up as his legs got benumbed, finally the naked Siddha had to be given a massage by devoted men and women till proper blood circulation was re-established in his benumbed legs!

This incident alone would have been enough for any sensible person to suspect the genuineness of this "Bhagawan's" claim of having attained "siddhi"!!

Intelligent persons do not decide on any subject until they have carefully examined all sides of it Fools, cowards and the lazy accept things blindly.

Mr. V. A. Menon sent me the clippings of three articles about a "Bhagawan"—His Holiness Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamigal—from the Sunday newspaper Bharat Jyoti of Bombay. One was by the editor of that paper Mr. A. B. Nair under the caption "Some Unforgettable Experiences", another one by Mr. C. K. Narayanaswamy under the caption "Wonders of Spiritual Powers" and a third by one Mr. Vamanrao Rane under the caption "Where Science Failed".

The numerous incredible stories of miracles in these articles prompted me to write the following letters.

Sri A B Nair,
Editor,
"Bharat Jyoti",
21, Dalal Street,
Fort, Bombay-1

"Tiruvalla",
89, Pamankada Lane,
Colombo-6
4-5 1971

An Open Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I read with keen interest your article about Sri La Sri Pandrimalai Swamigal published in the Bharat Jyoti of December 20, 1970 kindly made available to me by a friend I am writing this to comment on the following points from that article for your own reading as well as the readers of Bharat Jyoti if you are kind enough to publish it The points and my comments are serialised below —

1 We must distinguish between the so-called occult phenomena paraded for existing curiosity making money and earning fame On the other hand there are miracles occasionally wrought by the Godly and the good to enlighten or to transform

I agree with you But don t you think verification is the only means by which we can distinguish magic from *miracles*?

2 Belief rests not on what is called scientific demonstration but on faith Faith transcends reason

Even if faith is to transcend reason should it transcend truth? Faith in untruth is superstition!

3 Our Punyabhoomi has been blessed with an unbroken succession of saints and sages These men and supermen of Hindustan have sanctified the length and breadth of India These God men are not confined to one particular age there has been a continuous stream of them Even today lakhs of such God men live in our holy land A few however give us occasional glimpses of their powers by means of divine manifestations if only to instil faith and help reform *irreverent sceptic misguided humanity to enable them* to move God ward

It is absurd to think that Hindustan alone had miracle performing supermen in the past or even at present

Brought up as a Christian I too believed in my childhood the miracles mentioned in the Bible As a child I blindly believed in the miracle of Santa Claus coming into my bedroom on Christmas night with presents for me! If I still believe in that miracle, you will naturally take me to be a gullible fool!!!

Really, are there miracles in this world? Everything that happens in the universe is natural, and not supernatural. There may be mysteries for which man has not yet found explanations Many of the mysteries of yesterday are solved today Many of the mysteries of today may or may not be solved tomorrow Till such time when we find scientific explanations for the present mysteries, it is foolish on our part to believe blindly the speculative explanations given for them by our primitive forbears

Almost all religious books all over the world are full of stories about miracles performed by diverse Gods and God-men Since they are all things of the past we are not in a position to verify the truth about them On the other hand are we not in a position to investigate the truth about the "miracles" of the "lakhs of God men who give us glimpses of their powers by means of divine manifestations to reform irreverent sceptics" at present?

4 "What we cannot comprehend we must not condemn but venerate We have in our midst God-men who, by the control and direction of their inner powers or siddhis are able to achieve the incredible"

Should we venerate all we cannot comprehend? Professor Bhagyanath the well known magician of India, is capable of performing wonderful illusory magics Are we to venerate him because we are not in a position to comprehend the art involved?

If a so-called God man's "miracle" is proved to be genuine after thorough investigations, there is no harm in venerating him although his miracles defeat all known laws of science Only in such cases "can faith transcend reason" On the other hand, if a miracle-performing siddha is found to be a hoaxer as a result of scientific investigation, instead of venerating him he should be condemned and exposed to the public

5 "I venture to share with our dear readers some unique experiences I and my friend Sri S Ramakrishnan were privileged to have recently at Madras"

You have listed in your article numerous 'miracles' performed by Sri La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamigal before you and your friend Neither you nor your friend conducted any investigation to establish the truth about them Without doing that, you have published those fantastic stories for the masses to read and believe!

When a person has a systematic bias that distorts his perception of reality we tend to consider him mentally sick If a nation is guided by the distorted perception of a mentally ill person, the nation too can become mentally sick! The fact that there are other persons equally sick is no cause for rejoicing

I am sure you will agree with me that it is foolish and dangerous to accept a thing blindly without verification Simply because a person claims to be a saint or siddha all he says and does need not be accepted without verification

Even a mediocre magician will be able to perform all the "miracles" you and your friend saw Pandrimalai Swamigal perform What we have to make sure is whether the Swamigal performed them by jugglery or by divine powers This can be done only by foolproof investigations

For over half a century I have been investigating all types of alleged supernatural phenomena and I am yet to find a "God man" or "siddha" with supernatural powers I have come to the conclusion on testable evidence that those who claim supernatural powers are either charlatans or mentally deranged persons

I do, therefore, hereby challenge through your paper Sri La Sri Pandrimalai Swamigal to produce vibhuti, sugar candy etc, after I make a thorough search of his body and dress Since, as you say, the purpose of his performing the miracles is to "reform sceptics", he should be willing to accept my challenge If he is reluctant to allow me to search his body I am prepared to avoid it I will be satisfied if he can produce a replica of a two or five rupee currency note shown to him If the serial

number on the replica is the same as the one on the original, I will not only discard my rationalistic views, but also become his loyal devotee!

If the Swamigal is willing to allow me to conduct this investigation, I am prepared to come over to his residence to do so.

If under some lame excuse he evades facing this test, I will have to come to the conclusion that he is a charlatan out to hoodwink the credulous.

Yours, in search for truth,
Sgd. Abraham T. Kovoor
President, Ceylon Rationalist Association.

* *

"Tiruvalla",
Pamankada Lane,
Colombo-6.
15-4-1971.

Sri Pandrimalai Swamigal,
12, Sri Pandrimalai Swami St.,
Pundur, Dindigal,
Tamil Nad.

Dear Swami,

I have read a few articles in the **Bharat Jyoti** that you are capable of materialising various things miraculously by your Siddhi.

As I am interested in investigating all claims of supernatural powers, I request you to give me kindly an opportunity to conduct a search into your claims.

If you are able to materialise any object I ask after a thorough search of your body and dress, I will not only worship you as a "holy" person, but also pay a sum of Rs. 25,000 as an "offering".

Perhaps you will agree with me that very often unsuspecting folks, even though highly educated are hoodwinked by jugglery of crafty charlatans in the garb of holy men. It is to eliminate this type of danger that I am keen on verifying the truth about all such claims and it is my sincere hope that you will co-operate with me for the benefit of fellow men and for the sake of truth.

If you are reluctant to "defile" your body by my searching you, I am prepared to avoid it Instead, if you can produce a replica of a small currency note I would be showing you I will be convinced of your siddhi

If you fail to give me this chance under some lame excuse or by keeping silent, I will have to come to the logical conclusion that you too are a juggler like Sai Baba of Puttaparthi, out to exploit fools!

Awaiting a reply,

Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

* * *

A similar letter was sent to Mr Vamanrao Rane also But so far none of these persons have replied!

* * *

Miracle mongers are not peculiar to India alone Though a small island, Sri Lanka is comparatively rich in similar hoaxers

A medical practitioner in Colombo claims that Bhagawan Sri Sai Baba materialised before him in an office in Colombo and held a conversation with him in Sinhalese in the presence of several others! It is rather amusing that not a single person among the "several others" has come forward to corroborate the doctor's story!!

There are several homes in Ceylon where it is claimed that "vibhuthi" drops—rather is made to drop—from Sai Baba's pictures! Some others claim that watches sugar candy, milk, prasadam, etc, materialise before the pictures of Sai Baba Devotees assemble in large numbers on Thursdays in those houses where such "miracles" are alleged to occur to take part in the "Bhagawan Puja"

A miracle performing devotee of Sai Baba from Bandarwela accepted our challenge to demonstrate his Siddhi at a meeting of the Ceylon Rationalist Association But on the appointed day the Swamiji vanished from Bandarawela with a young woman devotee!

The disappointed members and visitors however, got a chance of seeing how Bhagawans and Siddhas perform miracles Mr M D Chandrasena a member of the Ceylon Rationalist Association and The Sri Lanka Magic

Circle, "materialised" plenty of vibhuti from "nowhere" and distributed to some of the devotees present

A retired Permanent Secretary of Ceylon concludes that Sai Baba is an incarnation of Vishnu because he once saw Baba's robe "turn dark blue and shine".

One S. Ranganathan says that the Bhagawan (Sri Baba) performs surgical operations with "instruments materialised from nowhere"!

A Sinhalese devotee of Sai Baba says, "In the year 1957, a well equipped hospital was established by him (Baba) at Puttapart adjoining his house. Doctors qualified in modern Western system of medicine serve there, while Sree Sathya Sai Baba himself ministers to the patients by using his potent spiritual-powers to good advantage. What is unusual about his treatment is that cures are effected without recourse to drugs" (**Ceylon Daily News** 27-4-70).

This gentleman is so immersed in credulity that he does not have the commonsense to reason why this Bhagawan, who is capable of curing the sick without drugs, and performing surgical operations without surgical instruments, needs doctors qualified in "Western system of medicine" in his hospital! Do these doctors also use Holy Ash, instead of Western medicines and surgical instruments for treating the sick at the Bhagawans's hospital?

Indira Gandhi Debunks a Bhagawan

The newspaper **Thinakaran Varamanjari** published a full page article on 17-10-1971, by Mr. Panchakshara Kurukkal of Jaffna, about another Bhagawan of India called Neelakanta Baba.

Like other devotees of Ceylon, who often go to India on pilgrimage to have "darsan" of the juggling Bhagawan Sai Baba, Mr. Kurukkal also went on a pilgrimage. He went to have a "darsan" not of Sai Baba, but of Neelakanta Baba because Mr. Kurukkal was told by a friend in Madras that the miracles of the latter Baba were much superior to those of the former.

A few of the numerous miracles of Neelakanta Baba Mr. Kurukkal described in that article were:—

1 "Once when the Bhagawan Neelakanta Babaji was in tears, the picture of Siva hanging on the opposite wall also started shedding tears'
2 "The eye sight of a blind boy was restored by the Bhagawan rubbing the blind eyes with Holy Ash produced from nowhere'
3 "The waters of a river in Tamil Nad separated at the Bhagawan's orders, making way for a car to be driven across with him'
4 "Bhagawan materialised himself several times in several places simultaneously"
5 "A car in which the Bhagawan was once travelling stopped on a jungle road for want of petrol The Bhagawan took the steering-wheel himself and drove the car without petrol for 23 miles to reach the next petrol station"
6 "The Governor of Andhra Pradesh Mr Nagesh was presented with a 'Sivalingam' materialised from Baba ji's stomach"
7 "Bhagawan materialised himself at an operating theatre in a hospital in London where Governor Nagesh was undergoing a surgical operation"
8 "Bhagawan materialised crystal lingams from nowhere and presented them to the Prime Minister Sreemathi Indira Gandhi and the former Rashtrapathi Dr S Radhakrishnan when they called on him to get his blessings"

To verify the truth about this type of false miracle stories about Bhagawans Babas Rishis Gurus, Siddhas Arahants Mystics and Saints I wrote the following letter to the Prime Miniser of India —

18 11 1971

The Hon ble Srimati Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi

Hon ble Madam

I am reproducing below a passage from an article about a miracle performing 'Bhagawan' of Tamil Nad called Neelakanta Babaji from a newspaper in this country —

"Among the numerous persons who have visited the Bhagawan to worship him and obtain his blessings, was

the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. While blessing her the Bhagawan presented her with a crystal 'lingam' produced from nowhere. As a result of this she is flourishing in triumph and fame".

I shall be much obliged if you will kindly let me know whether there is any truth in the above story. I am rather reluctant to encroach on your very valuable time at this juncture, but, since this report is liable to influence the lives of millions in Ceylon as well as in India, I am forced to check up.

Yours in service,
Sgd. Abraham T. Kovoor.

The reply to this letter is reproduced below:—

Prime Minister's Secretariat

New Delhi,
November 22, 1971

No. Pms 25594,
Mr. Abraham T. Kovoor,
Editor,
"The Ceylon Rationalist Ambassador",
89, Pamankada Lane, Colombo 6,

Dear Sir,

Please refer to your letter of the 18th November, 1971.

I am instructed by the Prime Minister to inform you that there is no truth in the story that the Prime Minister called on Neelakanta Babaji and that he produced a 'lingam' from nowhere.

Yours faithfully,
Sgd. N. K. Seshan,
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister.

* * *

What made a busy person like the Prime Minister of India, who was fully preoccupied during the time I wrote by her country's war with Pakistan, reply me so soon? Being a rationalist like her father Mrs Gandhi might have realised the urgency because of the harmful effect on millions of simpletons if such fictitious stories are not denied and debunked then and there!

We hope this exposure will help the numerous devotees of Sai Baba and other Bhagawans to realise that it is proper to doubt and check up the truth about their alleged miracles

Since ordinary people have a weakness to believe blindly whatever they read in print the devotees of various so called Bhagawans would do well to verify the truth about the numerous cock and bull stories about babas bhagawans and swamijis before they write in newspapers

If *Neelakanta Babaji could drive a car without* petrol for 23 miles, he could have continued to drive without taking petrol at "the next petrol station" and saved some money! If the Government of India had recruited the many Bhagawans and Swamijis in that country into the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force that country could have used the planes, ships, tanks and trucks in the war against Pakistan without any fuel!

One of the greatest impediment the Indian forces had to face in their advance in Bangla Desh was the crossing of the numerous rivers because the retreating Pakistan army had blown up all the bridges The Indian Bhagawans could have ordered the waters of those rivers to separate for the army vehicles to get across!

Dr T Nallainathan says that when an American pilot Charles Penn was in trouble, Bhagawan Sai Baba appeared in the cockpit of his plane and brought it safely to the landing ground If this is true, India would not have lost a single plane during the war Bhagawans would have appeared in the cockpits of the Indian military planes and given them protection!

Why did Mrs Indira Gandhi appeal to Governments all over the world to help her country in feeding the 10 million Bangla Desh refugees when she could have simply appealed to Sai Baba and other Bhagawans to feed them daily by their miraculous powers? Why did she not appeal to Sai Baba who "cures sick people without drugs" to save the lives of thousands by his miraculous power when cholera broke out in the refugee camps?

* * *

A CEYLONESE BHAGAWAN!

The following extracts from some letters published in newspapers in Ceylon will show the reader how Bhagawans are created by religious paranoiacs.

"On Tuesday, September 14, speaking after a Bhajan meeting at the Sindhi Centre at Kollupitiya, Swami Shantanand was answering in general questions put to him about the rationalists and Mr. Abraham Kovoor. He said that Abraham Kovoor is an Avathar (incarnation of God) like Ramaswami Naiker. 'I have not seen this gentleman (Kovoor), but I think he is a deeply religious man in search of truth' the Swami said... 'Mr. Kovoor may not be religious by our standards, but he is doing a useful service by exposing our superstitions".

(The Ceylon Observer, 22 9.71)

"Once again I would like to elucidate the point about Mr. Kovoor being an Avathar. Mr. Kovoor, as you know is a born rationalist. As such he has swept away many cobwebs of superstitions that tended to fog the shining light of true faith. It is in this context that the Swamiji referred to Mr. Kovoor as an Avathar. In his own way Mr. Kovoor is clearing the vision of the superstitious populace. Surely he is doing religion a great service".

(A Kataragama Devotee in the Ceylon Observer)

"Swami Shantananda took the opportunity to refer to Mr. Kovoor and rationalism in the course of his talk on religious stupidities on the 14th instant.

"He said he had heard bewildering reports from his followers about this so-called rationalist leader about his total denial of the existence of God life after death. etc. The good Swami stated that he considered Mr. Kovoor's statement against God and Spiritual matters as results of his probing into these questions. 'Doubt being the beginning of wisdom'...

"The topic of Mr. Kovoor is coming to me everyday and I am resisting the temptation of discussing that name here. I have not seen the gentleman. I have not talked to him, but he must be a perfect gentleman. One thing I am certain. He must be a deeply religious man but not in the way you want him to be. There is an awaken-

ing in his soul. Whenever there is a process of awakening that process is religion He is a wonderful man, though *sometimes he provokes you.*

'This kind of action is necessary to root out religious stupidities Mr. Kovoor is right when he hits you You deserve it. He has the spirit of enquiry in him. That is *why he is posing questions. So many things look ridi*culous in his understandings and he is boldly talking about them. If you look in this way, he is doing a great service to the people of Ceylon, especially the so-called *religious people...*

"As rational beings, we must be able to throw out stupidity from any quarter...Mr. Kovoor is right when *he questions religion. A time will come when that soul will get perfect awakening, because he has the audacity* to question the nonsense in religion, whereas we don't.

(L. Ratnanand in the Ceylon Observer.)

"E. V. R. Periar is an incarnation of God. Sri Abra*ham Kovoor is sent by God to remove ignorance from* people and to enlighten them with divine light. Bhagawan Sai baba has not led any one into wrong paths". So said Swami Shantanand at a special interview given *to "Thinakaran".*

(Thinakaran Varamanjari)

"At a press interview, Swami Santanand from Rishikesh is reported to have said that Mr. Abraham Kovoor is an incarnation of God (Avathar) like Sri Satya Sai Baba and Ramaswami Naikkar. On September 14, at the Bhajan held at the Sindhi Centre, Colombo, Swamiji said Mr. Kovoor is an Avathar in search of truth. I like to know what a rationalist like Mr. Kovoor has to say about this".

(A. Ramanathan in the Ceylon Observer)

From the day this Swami made this absurd statement, I was able to experience the evil effects of it. Religious fanatics, who normally kept- aloof from me, began to greet me with genuflectory gestures. They even started coming home to have "darsan" of the new "Bhagawan"! To rectify the mischief done by the "Holy" man from Rishikesh, I had to publish the following letter through newspapers :—

"I AM NOT AN AVATHAR"

"It appears that a Swamiji called Shantanand, claiming to be the disciple of another Swamiji who has his residence in the so-called sacred abode of mystics of India—Rishikesh in the Himalayas—has said during the course of his sermon at a Bhajan meeting that 'Kovoor is an 'Avathar' (incarnation of God) and a deeply religious man in search of truth'.

"According to an article in the "THINAKARAN VARAMANJARI" this Swami is reported to have repeated the same statement at a press interview, and compared me with two other "avathars"—Sai Baba and Periar Ramaswami Naikkar of India.

"This statement of a 'Holy' man is sure to mislead thousands of his Blimpian followers in this country. If I am an impostor and an opportunist, this will be a fine occasion for me to become an "avathar" by posing as one; and I am sure there will be thousands of persons to worship me and genuflect before me.

"On what evidence did this swamy say "Kovoor is an Avathar"? Not a single person present at the Bhajan meeting had the courage or the common sense to ask him this question.

"If this Swami sincerely believed what he said, I must say emphatically that he is utterly wrong. On the other hand, had he made this statement just to please and placate the increasing number of youths in this country who see more reason and sense in rationalism than in religions, one has to doubt his sincerity.

This Swami is right in his statement, "Kovoor is a seeker of truth". I have sought and found out the truth that all gods, bhagawans, swamijis, sidhas, saints, demons, devils, angels, arahants and avathars are creations of deluded neurotics or crafty "Holy" men!

"Already numerous credulous folks have started coming to my house to have a "darsan" of the new "Bhagawan"! Kindly publish this letter and save me from these unwelcome "devotees".

Sgd. Abraham T. Kovoor.

* * *

Q "Newspapers report that a girl of 8 years recited verses from the sacred scriptures Satya Sai Baba is known to produce ashes and watches from empty hands Bible tells that Lord Christ walked on water In the face of these miracles why do you disbelieve in God?"

A "Enquiry and examination of so-called miracles reveal that either miracles did not happen or they were mere jugglenes Many rumours are spread by credulous persons and the agents of religious belief Verification proves them false Wherever they happen, closer examination exposes the trick that is played Satya Sai Baba has been challenged several times to submit his "miracles" to scrutiny He is escaping everytime into the shelter of the hundreds of gullible devotees that surround him

"Not only the Bible but many religious books and mythologies contain such stories as walking on water, lifting up mountains or breaking the moon They never happened They are just myths ascribed to prophets to make them look great and extraordinary This very attempt has distorted the picture of the prophets and separated them from the people Christ did not require walking on water to prove his greatness His Sermon on the Mount, services to the people, and chastisement of anything insincere were sufficient to make him respectable On the other hand by ascribing miracles to great men, usefulness of their lives was lost, since people worshipped them rather than adopting the way of life which they taught and showed by examples If miracle alone would make a man great, every juggler would be great

"The belief in god has little to do with miracles Faith is an expression of the slave mentality of men The vested interests in slavery divert attention and side track thinking by talking of miracles The greatness of anyone consists in honest living and service to the people, but never in making 'miracles' Those who talk of miracles are either dupes or cheats".

* * *

I conclude my comments on Bhagawans by reproducing the following news item from "The Nation" of April 15, 1972—

"KOVOOR BHAGAVAN PERFORMS MIRACLES"

"I Can Save Foreign Exchange"

(By Our Roving Correspondent)

Mr Abraham T Kovoor stole the show at the monthly meeting of the Ceylon Rationalists Association held last Sunday at Thurstan College He performed a magic show that kept his audience on their toes, and spiced it with his cracks which kept them in stitches Mr Kovoor first played a pre recording of his lecture, "Magic, Miracle and Myth"

After he had finished this he performed trick number one, materialisation of "holy" ash from nowhere This act is incidently very popular with Mr Sai Baba across the straits in India What Mr Kovoor was trying to show was that all it involved was sleight of hand, and that despite Sai Baba or anybody else's claim that the materialisation of ash is a divine miracle, Kovoor could do it all on his own

With ash trickling out of his clenched palm Mr Kovoor strode down the aisle amidst cheers and shouts of "Haro Hara" distributing his "Holy" ash At the back of the hall he insisted that even the policemen present should help themselves to his holy ash, "even they must go to heaven" he said considerately

His next trick was stopping his pulse beat Due to the fact that he had already had three heart attacks Mr Kovoor said that he would only halt it for about a minute "After all you will all want to see Kovoor again wont you?" he asked as Dr Niles and a medical student checked his pulse

Mr Kovoor then got on to fire-eating No doubt he felt that Dr Carlo Fonseka has settled the fire walking question once and for all After finishing his meal of flames he jokingly remarked that, since his moustache

was not divine, he had taken the precaution of having it trimmed the previous day!

Mr Kovoor's last act was telepathy The slips of paper containing the names of ten members of the audience and questions of their choice were sealed in ten envelopes Mr Kovoor was able without opening even one of the envelopes to give both name and question And he was right all the ten time! As he himself said, he could make a pile of money if he sought to fool gullible people by claiming that he possessed supernatural powers

In order to accomplish amazing feat Mr Kovoor summoned the spirit of the Rt Hon Mr D S Senanayake, first Prime Minister of Ceylon This was really because the first question was about the duration of the present Government Mr Kovoor (or is it Mr Senanayake?) was certain that it would be only four more years

The second questioner wanted to know what powers Mr Kovoor had "I had no divine powers, only common sense," he replied When asked how he got the 'holy' ash, he replied "by drying cow dung"

One question exposed Mr Kovoor's weak point—history He didn't know when President John F Kennedy's birthday was But he got around that deftly enough "Mr Senanayake says he doesn't know," said Mr Kovoor getting on to the next question

Mr Kovoor's punch-line was that the country could save valuable foreign exchange if the gullible devotees who go on pilgrimages to India and other places were to come to "Kovoor Bhagavan" instead "There are two kinds of pilgrimages to India, one to buy sarees and the other to visit the yogis and swamis, rishis and bhagavans, a third kind of pilgrimage will soon commence, now that India has legalised abortions"

Chapter—8

AMOROUS GODS AND GODDESSES

All religions have their own gods Members of one religion have no faith in the gods of other religions. Some religions are monotheistic, and others polytheistic. Let us get acquainted with the sexual morality of some of these gods, and their genesis as given in the scriptures of respective religions, and compare their morality with that of civilized man.

Brahma and Saraswati

Brahma is one of the three main gods — Trimurti — of the Hindu pantheon. He is the creator of the universe. Saraswati, who became the wife of her own father, was the daughter of Brahma. There are two stories about her genesis in the "Saraswati Purana". One is that Brahma created his beautiful daughter Saraswati direct from his "vital strength" or seminal fluid. The other is that Brahma used to collect his semen in a pot whenever he masturbated fixing his carnal eyes on the celestial beauty Urvasi. Brahma's semen in the pot gave birth to the sage Agastya, and Agastya in turn gave birth to Saraswati Thus, Saraswati had no mother

This daughter or grand-daughter of Brahma is the Hindu goddess of learning. When Brahma saw the beauty of Saraswati he became amorous. To escape from her father's passionate approach Saraswati ran to the lands in all four directions, but she could not escape from her father. She succumbed to Brahma's wish. Brahma and his daughter Saraswati lived as husband and wife indulging in incest for 100 years. They had a son Swayambhumaru and a daughter Satarupa. Swayambhumaru made love with his sister Satarupa. Through the incest of Brahma's son and daughter Brahma got two grandsons and two grand-daughters.

SHIVA

God Shiva had two wives—Ganga and Parwati It was while Shiva was frolicking and making love with Parwati in the forest in the form of elephants that Ganapati the god with the head of an elephant was born On another occasion when Shiva was frolicking with Parwati in the form of a monkey Hanuman the monkey god was born

Once when Parwati was away Shiva had sexual intercourse with a woman called Madhura who came to Kailas to worship him On her return Parwati saw her husband Shiva making love with Madhura Instead of reprimanding her husband for raping a devotee Parwati cursed Madhura and she became a frog When the period of the curse was over after twelve years the frog took the form of Mandodari who became the wife of Ravana the ten headed king of Lanka The sperm of Shiva which remained dormant in the womb of Mandodari when she was a frog began to develop and finally gave birth to Indrajit Thus the so called son of Ravana—Indrajit of Lanka—was an illegitimate son of Shiva

INDRA

Indra is the head of all gods Amarawati was his celestial residence Arjun was born to Indra as a result of his clandestine adultery with Pandu s wife Although Indra had Sruthawadi as his wife he had no hesitation in committing adultery with the wives of other men One day when Indra saw Ruchi the beautiful wife of Devasarma he became extremely passionate and wanted to seduce her But Ruchi chased Indra out and he had to go away disappointed

On another occasion Indra could not control his sexual passion when he saw Goutama s wife Ahalya He committed adultery with Ahalya when her husband was away On his return home Goutama saw Indra in sexual interlock with his wife Goutama cursed both of them

Once Aruna visited Devaloka in the disguise of a woman When Indra saw this woman in disguise he could not control his passion He had sexual intercourse

with this imitation woman Bali was born as the result of this un-natural homosexual cohabitation.

KRISHNA

Krishna is the 9th incarnation of the god Mahavishnu Like Jesus Christ, Krishna was born as the "son of man" at Ambadi among cowherds Although he had sixteen thousand and eight wives, Krishna did not let other women go free Once, when he saw some Gopi women bathing in the river Kalindi, Krishna carried away their clothes from the bank of the river, and got on a nearby tree to feast his eyes on the Gopi women bathing in the nude He returned their dresses only after each of them came out of the water and worshipped him so that he could see their nude bodies in full It is claimed that Krishna was so potent that he could satisfy all his 16008 wives at the same time

RAMA

Sri Rama was another incarnation of Mahavishnu He and his three brothers Lakshmana Bharata and Shatrugna were born to three wives of King Dasharatha Like Jesus Ram and his brothers were not through a human father although Dasharatha was the husband of their mothers They were conceived in their mothers' wombs as a result of the three women eating portions of a sacred porridge

JESUS CHRIST

Although St Mary's other children were born to her husband Joseph it is said that Jesus alone was born to her as she got conceived through Holy Ghost, one of the three-in one god of the Christians Although Mary had many children she is worshipped as a virgin by Christians

SHEELAVATI'S CONCEPTION

According to a Buddhist scripture Sheelavati conceived in an unusual way like St Mary and the wives of King Dasaratha without sexual congress with a man Shakra in

the Devaloka knew that Sheelavati on the earth was pining to have a child God Shakra came down to the earth one night when Sheelavati was sleeping He touched Sheelavati's navel with his toe and she conceived and gave birth to a child

SABARIMALAI SASTHA

Sabarimalai Sastha or Ayyappa is a sylvan god worshipped by the credulous Hindus of Kerala and Tamil Nadu in India He is the son born to Siva and Vishnu as a result of a homosexual act

To escape from the curse of the powerful demon Durwasa, all the gods joined together and churned the milky ocean to gather "Amrut"—a butter like ambrosia They collected the "Amrut" in a pot, and kept it to be served at a heavenly feast An Asura (demon) from the nether world stole the pot of "Amrut from Devaloka When the loss of the ambrosia was detected, the omniscient Vishnu was able to know where it was He went to the nether world in the guise of Mohini, a woman of exquisite beauty, and brought back the "Amrut" and served it to the gods When Mohini was serving the Amrut, Shiva got intoxicated with her beauty and had sexual intercourse with her, who was in reality Vishnu Vishnu became pregnant as a result of the homosexual act, and gave birth to Sastha from his thigh Both Shiva and Vishnu discarded this un naturally born illegitimate child in the forests of Sabarimalai in Kerala

JAGANNATH

Jagannath is the god enshrined in the famous Hindu temple at Puri Sankaracharya, the spiritual head of the present Hindus of India, is a devotee of Jagannath of Puri Hundreds of measures of rice and dal are cooked here daily to feed the thousands of worshippers

At the Jaya-Vijaya gate of this temple various types of sexual orgies of the god Jagannath can be seen sculptured on granite stones On the outer walls of this temple are life size sculptures of the 64 types of sexual mating of men and women as described in the Kamasutra of Vatsyayana.

The dance Bhajan in this temple begins after 10 p m each day behind closed doors. It is performed by one of the 120 dancing girls in the service of the temple. Each night a new dancing girl will have to come to the temple to dance before god Jagannath This dance is witnessed only by the lifeless statue of Jagannath and the Brahmin priest who plays on the musical instrument

As the dance heightens to a crescendo, the girl discards her dress and dances stark naked. She then throws herself to the statue of Jagannath in an ecstasy shouting, "O Lord, I am thy bride, please make love with me".

Whether it is the lifeless idol of Jagannath or the living Brahmin priest who makes love with her is not known.

Dancing girls who have retired from the service of god Jagannath are now making both ends meet by leading a life of prostitution in the streets of holy Puri. Their patrons are the worshippers who come in their thousands to the sacred city.

In reality none of these gods exist or ever existed They are the products of mental fantasies of some surrealistic creative thinkers of the past Even today there are mentally deranged persons indulging in creating new gods. All the amorous stories connected with these gods also are the subjective creations of sex-starved surrealistic thinkers obsessed with sexual thoughts

The abominable and perverted morality among the godmen of India may be due to the abnormal sex behaviour of their gods! Tal Brooke, the American devotee of Sai Baba, has written in his book about Sai Baba's homosexual assaults on himself and other fair-skinned youths at Puttaparti

According to Beatle John Lennon, the reason why the Beatles left Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was the Maharishi's attempt to rape one of their women—Mia Farrow.

Guru Maharaj Ji was caught by a hidden camera in osculatory embrace with the house-maid while his American wife was in another room.

The first Shankaracharya—Adisankara—who led a celibate life claimed omniscience. He could not answer a question from a devotee about sex matters as he could not speak with authority about a thing he had not ex-

perienced So he asked the devotee to come later, and said that he would answer him after experiencing sex It is stated that Shankaracharya got into the body of a married man, and had sex with his wife

Those who clamour for teaching religion in schools seldom realize the dangers of teaching innocent children in their impressionable ages obscene stories about these imaginary gods According to the modern standards of civilized man's eth cs and morality these gods are very bad examples for our children to emulate Let us refrain from teaching falsehood to our children in the name of religion!

Chapter—9

KARANJIA AND SAI BABA

Gullible journalists are more harmful to society than other gullibles because, unlike the latter, the former can spread mental pollution on a mass scale through their writings in widely read newspapers and magazines Mr R K Karanjia, the editor of the prestigious weekly, **Blitz,** has been consistently polluting the minds of **Blitz** readers by publishing in it a lot of cock-and-bull occult stories about spirit media, third eye, extra sensory perception psychic healing, demons, ghosts, "kundalini" and the so-called miraculous powers of godmen like Sai Baba Dadaji, Dattabal, Hazrat Ali and several others

Kundalini Yoga

Extolling the fictitious "siddhis" of Kundalini yoga Mr Karanjia writes, Kundalini Shakti or Serpent Power cannot be denied On the contrary, recent investigations in the fields of psychic and psycho-kinetic phenomena, proving that mind can influence matter in ways inexplicable to science, vindicate this ancient truth (**Blitz,** April 17, 1976)

Mastery of Kundalini Shakti enables the yogi to master life and the universe with siddhis or powers, over the invisible forces of Nature described as the supernatural or the miraculous These can be listed as the siddhis of genius, prophesy, clairvoyance astral projection, levitation, freedom from diseases and death, psychic healing, ability to transmute metals, materialise at will in any part of the world, live in eternal youth, make oneself lighter than the lightest substance or heavier than the heaviest become as large or small as one pleases, render oneself invisible, command all objects, even overcome the bonds of Karma by cutting asunder the chain of death and birth and thereby become exempt from rebirth and suffering

India can provide living examples of a hundred, may be a thousand or more Godmen known, witnessed and proven as capable of performing one and all of these miracles There are a dozen biographies of Satya Sai Baba by Indian as well as by foreign disciples attesting to this fact Nor are these the wonders of an era in which science is rediscovering its forgotten psychic and psycho kinet c expertise, for the secret of this prime law of nature has been known to India for the past 5,000 years or more (*Blitz*, May 1, 1976)

Any Yogi 5,000 Years Old?

In my permanent challenge to claimants of super-natural or miraculous powers I have offered a reward of ONE LAKH RUPEES to anyone who can perform any of the 22 items of "miracles" I have listed Almost all the siddhis of Kundalini yoga mentioned by Mr Karanjia are in that list If this gullible journalist, who has published in his paper stories extolling the siddh s of several godmen of India, can find one among the "thousand and more" siddhas in India to face my "fraud-proof investigation", he will be able to realise the absurdity of his blind belief about the Kundalini cult and its fictitious siddhis

Only fools can believe that by practising kundalini yoga man can overcome death or live in perpetual youth If this kundalini technique was known to India for the past 5,000 years or more, there should be many kundalini yogis over 5,000 years old Can Mr Karanj a spot out one?

Astral Body?

To give some scientific authenticity to his absurd belief Mr Karanjia seeks support from some mind polluters in Russia Mr Karanjia sees evidence of "bio-plasma"—astral body or pranic sheath—in the luminous aura around the Kirlian photographs of persons (**Blitz**, May 8, 1976)

Photographs of any object—animate or inanimate—taken by Kirlian technique show luminous aura around

the object This has nothing to do with life in the object photographed I have with me Kirlian photographs of two metallic coins, showing brilliant aura round them Mr Karanjia might say that these coins too have prana sheaths or bio-plasma!

Hatayogi and Blitz

During a lecture I delivered at a public meeting at Bangalore, sponsored by the Karnatic Hypnotists' Circle in May 1977, I had occasion to speak about the fictitious claims of Hatha yoga and cited the case of a Hatha Yogi trying to exhibit his yogic ability to walk on water at a show sponsored by Mr Karanjia's paper BLITZ At the end of the meeting, among those who came to me for autographs there was a bearded man in yellow garb He shook hands with me and said

Sir, I am L S Rao, the Hatha yogi who tried to walk on water at Bombay. I was not demonstrating any yogic power It was only a trick of mine to make some money, and I made 27 lakhs in the deal

I was rudely shocked to hear that the exhibition of "yogic power" prophesied by the 'BLITZ' was only a hoax to make money!

It may be that Mr Karanjia had no hand in the fraud He, being an ardent believer in the siddhis of Hatha yoga, might have sponsored the show in good faith

A relevant passage from the front-page article in Blitz of 30th April, 1966 on "The fulfilment of a 30 years-old pledge of a prophet" under the sub-heading "A Million Rupee Yogic Trick" goes on as follows —

> "Yogi Rao will limit his audience to just 500 from all over the world and will sell them donor cards ranging in price from Rs 100/ to Rs 500/-
> "Is it a trick or a feat?' we asked Yogi Rao
> "Yes, it is a trick," he replied with a roguish smile beaming through his generously whiskered face 'but a yogic trick"

Readers may draw their own inference

The main aim of my numerous challenges was to convince intelligent and intellectual gullibles who have a tendency to accept what they all hear and read as true.

the new "avathar" However, Indian journalists were sceptical about it, and some of them treated the stunt as a huge hoax

When Prof A M Dharmalingam President of the Karnataka Rationalist Association, went with some journalists to Dr Rao to conduct the test on my behalf, he (Dr Rao) simply backed out of the encounter allowing his deposit to be confiscated by me Settappah, the father of the child, refused permission for testing the so called divine power of his son saying that he does not even know who Dr Rao is He said "My son has asked me to tell Dr Kovoor that he did not need his one lakh If he needs any money, tell him that I can produce it for him"

Thus, I returned after my 3rd Divine Miracle Exposure tour in India richer by Rs 1,000 Though I have not lost so far even one cent by my fifteen year old challenges, this is the first time it has yielded profit!

Dr Rao's willingness to part with his deposit has led me to suspect his part in this hoax It has made me to come to the conclusion that like Dr Andrija Puharich for Uri Geller, and Prof Kasturi and Dr Bhagavantham for Sai Baba, Dr Venkata Rao could be a collusive propaganda agent of Sai Krishna His readiness to pay the earnest deposit could be a ruse to get publicity, and thus attract millions of gullibles to Sai Krishna Probably he knew he could make more than his deposit by sharing the "offerings" collected by the boy's parents

At my last press conference in India I said that it is the duty of the Government to safeguard the masses of that country from exploitation by miracle mongers Like smugglers, exchange racketeers and bribe takers all the miracle men also should be taken into custody and subjected to strict scientific scrutiny and if their claims are found to be false, legal action should be taken against them for cheating the public

Hoax Exposed

My lecture campaigns against the miracle performers of India culminated in the Bangalore University setting up a committee of 12 under the chairmanship of the

Chapter—10

SAI KRISHNA AND KJELL EIDE

Kitty, a six-year-old boy of Pandavapura in Karnataka State, renamed Sai Krishna, claimed to be an incarnation of Lord Krishna by his parents and Sai Baba, is said to possess miraculous powers to materialize objects from nothing. It was reported that during the daily Sai Baba *bhajans conducted by the boy's parents and other Sai* Baba devotees Sai Krishna gets into a trance, and collapses into the lap of his mother. While he lies with his head in his mother's lap objects like pictures of Sai *Baba, Sai Baba medallions (made in Germany),* holy ash currency notes, honey, etc., materialize on and near him.

In response to my permanent challenge offering an award of one lakh Sri Lanka rupees to anyone who can demonstrate supernatural, parapsychic, spiritual, occult or any other miraculous powers, Dr. G. Venkata Rao of Bangalore paid Rs 1,000 as his earnest deposit to the General Secretary of the Indian Rationalist Association, my nominee in India, and wanted me to conduct the test on the "miracle boy", and pay him my award. In his *letter of September 24, 1975, describing Sai Krishna's* miraculous powers Dr Rao wrote, "..... My miracle boy will not only emit holy ash, kum kum, honey, etc. from his body, but also read the serial number of a sealed-up currency note It is only an ordinary event for him When you see his miracles you will be satisfied You will then have to shell out one lakh rupees. I was told by the child that you are trying to earn international reputation. In that attempt, the child has predicted, you will lose whatever public respect you have. You will be reaping the harvest soon."

Wide publicity in India through newspapers about Dr. Rao's acceptance of my challenge attracted millions of credulous people to Sai Krishna to get the blessings of

the new "avathar' However, Indian journalists were sceptical about it, and some of them treated the stunt as a huge hoax

When Prof A M Dharmalingam President of the Karnataka Rationalist Association, went with some journalists to Dr Rao to conduct the test on my behalf, he (Dr Rao) simply backed out of the encounter allowing his deposit to be confiscated by me. Settappah, the father of the child, refused permission for testing the so called divine power of his son saying that he does not even know who Dr Rao is He said 'My son has asked me to tell Dr Kovoor that he did not need his one lakh If he needs any money, tell him that I can produce it for him"

Thus I returned after my 3rd Divine Miracle Exposure tour in India richer by Rs 1 000 Though I have not lost so far even one cent by my fifteen year old challenges, this is the first time it has yielded profit!

Dr Rao's willingness to part with his deposit has led me to suspect his part in this hoax It has made me to come to the conclusion that like Dr Andrija Puharich for Uri Geller, and Prof Kasturi and Dr Bhagavantham for Sai Baba, Dr Venkata Rao could be a collusive propaganda agent of Sai Krishna His readiness to pay the earnest deposit could be a ruse to get publicity and thus attract millions of gullibles to Sai Krishna Probably he knew he could make more than his deposit by sharing the 'offerings" collected by the boy's parents

At my last press conference in India I said that it is the duty of the Government to safeguard the masses of that country from exploitation by miracle-mongers Like smugglers exchange racketeers and bribe takers all the miracle men also should be taken into custody and subjected to strict scientific scrutiny and if their claims are found to be false legal action should be taken against them for cheating the public

Hoax Exposed

My lecture campaigns against the miracle performers of India culminated in the Bangalore University setting up a committee of 12 under the chairmanship of the

atomic scientist Dr H Narasimhaiah, the Vice Chancellor, to conduct scientific investigation on the so called miracles of Indian godmen It included academicians scientists psychologists psychiatrists doctors and lawyers

On July 15, 1976 some members of this committee visited Sai Krishna's residence un announced It was a Thursday They selected that day because the Sai Baba devotees of Pandavapura congregated there every Thursday for "Sai Bhajan", and Sai Krishna used to perform miracles before the devotees The Bhajan ended that day without any miracle As the congregation dispersed one of the committee members Dr (Mrs) Vinoda N Moorthy, a noted psychologist, noticed the boy fiddling about near the waist-band of his pants She asked 'What is troubling you child does your stomach ache?" "Yes" the child nodded and she went forward to help him to loosen the string which she thought was holding up his pants She pulled up his shirt and then his banyan Something came loose and then there was holy ash in plenty in the fold of the banyan.

Thus ended the godly life of Sai Krishna in the presence of the gullible devotees Had this fraud not been exposed in public like Sai Baba and his agents Sai Krishna and his parents would have raked in wealth in plenty, even to donate money for establishing schools colleges hospitals etc for covering up the fraud

Kjell Eide

While Sai Krishna is the product of deliberate fraud like Sai Baba, Kjell Eide of Goteborg Sweden appears to be a victim of cryptesthesia He is obsessed with the foolish and blind belief that it is possible for man to perform supernatural feats if he has implicit faith in his God!

In March 1976 I got the following letter from Mr Eide —

Dear Dr Kovoor,

I see in the Fate magazine of America that you are offering a reward to anyone who can demonstrate super natural powers

I would like to accept this challenge I will try to walk on water under conditions set by you Please let me know if it is enough to walk on water once, or whether you would demand a 'repeatable' demonstration (in which case I may not qualify)

In order to have a reference when I contact Swedish journalists could you write me a letter and re-state the offer of the reward, and briefly describe the conditions for walking on water and whether journalists can attend the 'demonstration' in order to take photographs and films

Yours very truly
Sgd Kjell Eide

In response to this letter I sent the following reply —

April 5, 1976

Mr Kjell Eide
Kjellmansgat 11-404
S-41318 Goteborg
Sweden

Dear Sir,

I am glad to know that you are prepared to take up my challenge published in the Fate magazine and demonstrate your supernatural powers by walking on the surface of water under conditions set by me

You are requested to kindly pay the earnest deposit of Rs 1 000 ($ 160) to my nominee in Sweden Mr Ulf Morling Asst Editor, Sydsvenska Dabladit Malamo Sweden

On hearing from Mr Morling that he has received your deposit I will be making arrangements to conduct the demonstration in public at one of the swimming pools in the city of Colombo, on a date suitable to both of us

Enclosed copy of my challenge will give you all necessary information

Yours in search of truth
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

On the same day I wrote to Mr Ulf Morling of Sweden requesting him to accept the earnest deposit from Mr

Eide as my nominee I also wrote the following letter to Mr Eide to intimate to him about an offer made by Mr Ariya Pathirana of Kurunegala to meet Mr Eide's board and lodging in Colombo and his return ticket from Colombo to Sweden if he succeeds in winning my award —

27 4 1976

Dear Mr Eide,

Enclosed newspaper clipping from the **Ceylon Daily Mirror** of today says that a prominent citizen of Sri Lanka has come forward to meet your board and lodging as well as the air ticket from Colombo to Sweden

Now there is no need for you to delay payment of your earnest deposit of $ 160 to my nominee Mr Ulf Morling

Hoping to hear from you that you have paid the deposit.

I remain
Yours in search of truth.
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

In his letter dated May 18 1976 Mr Eide wrote thus —

I have now paid to Mr Morling the earnest deposit of U.S $ 160 in cash I am ready to accept any day from November 15 to February 15 as a fixed date for the demonstration in Colombo of the possibility of walking on water

Thank you for bringing to my attention the offer of Mr Ariya Pathirana Any worries that I might get drowned in the swimming pool can be dismissed as I am able to swim

Yours very truly,
Sgd Kjell Eide

I had a letter from my nominee Mr Ulf Morling informing me that he had received the earnest deposit from Mr Eide In a letter I wrote to Mr Eide on July 7, 1976 I said —

Thanks for your letter informing me about your payment of the earnest deposit to my nominee This reply is delayed as I was away in India during the months of May and June on a lecture tour

Kindly let me know whether 12th or 13th February 1977 would suit you to give the demonstration I will be again in India for another lecture tour during the months of December and January

If you will kindly give me a short account of how you developed the miraculous power to walk on water bare footed I will be able to give that information to the publicity media here and abroad

Since this is likely to create a worldwide sensation elaborate preparations are to be made in connection with the demonstration as well as for controlling the crowd I have a feeling that I should spend money for making the necessary arrangements only after your arrival in Sri Lanka Moreover I am reluctant to disappoint the public who would naturally be booking their seats days ahead Therefore kindly let me know whether you can arrive in Sri Lanka on February 1 You will be provided free board and lodging for a fortnight You can see a b t of our beautiful country during your stay here

I remain,
Yours in search of truth
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

In his reply Mr Eide said thus —

February 12th or 13th 1977 will be suitable for the demonstration I shall arrive in Sri Lanka not later than February 1st It certainly is wise of you not to make any arrangements until after my arrival

In my next letter to Mr Eide I wrote —

As I have already published through Reuters and other news media that you have paid your earnest deposit of $160 I request you to kindly send it immediately as draft or cheque drawn in my name so that it may reach me before this month is out This is very important because if I fail to receive it by October 1, I will have to publish through the same media that you have backed out of the contest

I would like to get one or two photographs of you for local publicity

On September 19 I received from Mr Eide a cheque for U S $160 and a photograph of his I realized Sri Lanka rupees 2,274 82 by cashing the cheque

Now that Kjell Eide had confirmed his acceptance of the challenge, I released the news to the press, and started making enquiries by writing to the various swimming pools in the city Hotel Lanka Oberoi quoted Rs 10 000 and 10% service charges for conducting the demonstration there But the Rector of St Joseph's College, Rev Fr Dr Quintus Fernando was good enough to lend the college pool for a nominal fee of Rs 750 The date for conducting the test was fixed for February 12, 1977

In his final letter Kjell Eide said —

I will probably purchase a Tourist Ticket trip to Sri Lanka This arrangement includes air transportation both ways on fixed dates as well as hotel accommodation at Negombo for 3 000 Sw Crowns, whereas a single flight air ticket one way will amount to about the same price

As to my bio data, I am 29 years old, and have been working in Swedish ships I have been to U S A, Africa and Australia but not to India

I have not in any way been "training" to achieve paranormal powers As most major "psychics" I contend that these powers are granted to humanity by God . I am not married

In my final letter to Kjell Eide written from India I said —

I am on a lecture tour in India and will be back in Sri Lanka on the 6th of January

I have finalized all the arrangements to conduct the demonstration on February 12 at Colombo Final arrangements involving expenditure of money will be made only after your arrival in Colombo on 1st February Kindly let me know whether you would like to stay with me or at a hotel in Negombo

There are a lot of enquiries from various parts of the world about your performance I would be happy to hear any information you can give about you for prior publicity

Palmistry

While I was busy with the "walking on water" controversy, one Sittivinayakam from Batticaloa announced through a Tamil newspaper that he is prepared to take up my challenge on palmistry I invited him to come to Colombo to face my test on February 12 along with the "walking on water" test under the following conditions —

1 If Mr Sittivinayakam gets 19 correct answers out of 20 (95%) he will be entitled to my award of one lakh rupees provided he pays a refundable earnest deposit of Rs 1 000 one month before the date of the test

2. He will forfeit his deposit if he fails to win my award

3 If he does not want my award he need not pay the deposit as the test is being conducted in Colombo without any additional expense on my part

4 If, in the future test, he gets 95% correct answers I will be prepared to pay him first class train fare for his up and down journey

If Sittivinayakam is insistent that the test should be conducted at Batticaloa I am prepared to do so on a date after February 12 under the following conditions —

1 He must pay the earnest deposit whether he wants my award or not. This deposit should be paid one month in advance of the test

2. The responsibility for making the necessary arrangements for conducting the test will be with him

3 If he fails to score 95% correct answers he should pay me first class up and down train fare.

Backed Out

Neither Kjell Eide nor Sittivinayakam came to face the challenge Since the public was awaiting these sensational tests, the General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association had to release the following press statement —

Press release

Sri Lanka Rationalist Association

Walking on Water 2 2 1977

Mr Kjell Eide of Sweden who undertook to WALK ON THE SURFACE OF WATER in response to Dr Abraham Kovoor s offer of one lakh rupees and paid his earnest deposit of 160 U S. dollars has not arrived in Sri Lanka till yesterday — the last date fixed for his arrival in the island to make the necessary arrangements for conducting the demonstration on February 12th at the Joseph an Pool

This is the second time Dr Kovoor is winning money through his fifteen year old permanent challenge against persons who claim psychic parapsychic occult and spiri tual powers although he has not lost even one cent The first was from Dr G Venkata Rao of Bangalore for demonstrating the divine powers of the seven year old Sai Krishna of Pandavapura in Mysore — a protege of Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparti

Sai Krishna was proclaimed by his patron Sai Baba and his propaganda agents as the incarnation of Sri Krishna Last year the fraud behind the "miraculous powers of Sai Krishna was exposed by the investigating committee appointed by the University of Bangalore

Dr Kovoor is fully confident that Sathya Sai Baba also will be exposed before long by the recently constituted 'Sai Baba Exposure Committee', under his own chair manship composed of eminent scientists and university dons of India

Sgd Bandu Perera
General Secretary S L R.A

Chapter—11

HOW HOLY ASH APPEARS ON SAI BABA'S PICTURE

Mr Lal Fernando, a member of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association, came to see me at the General Hospital where I was undergoing treatment for cancer in the bladder During conversation he told me about how holy ash was being dropped mysteriously from the picture of Satya Sai Baba in the house of a rich Hindu of Colombo He showed me a sample of the ash he collected when he went to that house to see the "miracle" himself

The following correspondence that passed between me and the gentleman in whose house the so-called miracle was taking place will help the reader to understand the mystery behind the "miracle" of holy ash dropping from the pictures of Sai Baba —

General Hospital,
Colombo
29 7-1977

Mr C Carthigesan,
69/1, Ward Place,
Colombo 7

Dear Sir,

I am told that holy ash is mysteriously dropping from the picture of Sai Baba in your house As a person interested in investigating paranormal happenings I like to know whether I would be given an opportunity to investigate this mystery

Yours in search of truth,
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

C Cartigesan

69/1 Ward Place,
Colombo 7.
2nd August, 1977.

Dr. T. A. Kovoor, President,
Sri Lanka Rationalist Association,
Colombo.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter dated 29th July 1977 I have to state that it is correct that holy ash falls from the picture of Satya Sai Baba in my house.

I do not know the nature of the investigation you wish to conduct into this mystery. But if it is to be like what a friend of ours—Mr. Lal Fernando of Wellawatte — attempted by trying to prise the picture to see, as he said, whether a bag of holy ash is stuck behind it, I cannot agree to any such investigation.

This phenomenon, like one or two other features related to it, is personal to my wife, who had a dharshan of Satya Sai Baba on a recent visit to his Ashram in Bangalore. It has become a matter of faith with us, though both of us were sceptical in this regard prior to her visit to the Ashram. It is not taken by us as something to convince others of its nature, or to convert others to believe in Satya Sai Baba.

On the other hand, if it would be of any interest to you to hear an account of the events which led to the occurrence of this phenomenon in my residence, and of its continuance here, you are welcome to see us In that event I would suggest an appointment by telephone.

Yours sincerely,
Sgd. C. Carthigesan.

Mr. C. Carthigesan,
69/1 Ward Place,
Colombo 7.

"Tiruvalla",
89 Pamankada Lane,
Colombo 6.
10-8-1977.

Dear Sir,

May I thank you for your reply of 2nd August. My interest in this subject was roused by the assurance given

by Mr. Lal Fernando that from what he knew about your family, there could be no room for suspecting foul play.

My interest in investigating this type of phenomenon of materialisation of matter is to find out how they occur. I will be only glad if you will kindly give me an opportunity to do so.

Yours in search of truth,
Sgd. Abraham T. Kovoor.

* * *

C. CARTHIGESAN

69/1, Ward Place,
Colombo 7.
13th August, 1977.

Dr. Abraham T. Kovoor,
Colombo 6.

Dear Sir,

I have received your letter dated 10-8-77.

On the subject of your desire to investigate the mystery in question, there is hardly anything for me to add to what I have stated in my letter dated 2nd instant.

But, for you to decide whether it is worth your while viewing the picture and the holy ash fallen from it and talking the matter over with me, I give you some information

The picture was bought from a wayside vendor on the road just outside the entrance to the premises where the Whitefield (Bangalore) Ashram stands. It was bought only as a memento, and it was as a memento that it was stuck to the inner side of my wife's wardrobe door, not with the expectation of any mysterious happening flowing from it. It was therefore a surprise to us when the wardrobe was opened the next morning to see holy ash on the ledges of the door some 3 or 4 feet below the picture, and some holy ash fallen on the floor.

Another point of interest is that my wife, having been taken ill with a stroke about a fortnight after and having been put in a Nursing Home, said to me two or three

If you can hide that picture from your wife for a few days, you will be able to detect the part played by her in the so-called miracle. If, out of your piety or false fear of desecration, you refrain from getting at the root of the so-called mystery, you will be guilty of allowing her to become a psychotic as a result of your negligence

If you need my help in this matter, please let me know. I have helped several poltergeists to become normal again.

Please do not let your wife know about my diagnosis as there is a chance of adverse effects developing in her as a result of sudden exposure.

Yours sincerely,
Sgd. Abraham T. Kovoor.

* * *

C. CARTHIGESAN.

69/1, Ward Place,
Colombo 7.
6th September 1977.

Dr. Abraham T. Kovoor,
President,
Sri Lanka Rationalist Association,
Colombo.

Dear Sir,

Your letter dated 28th August 1977 was a shocking instrument of disillusion to me. When responding to your request for an opportunity to examine the "mysterious" appearance of holy ash under the picture of Sai Baba in my house, I had credited you, as President of a Rationalist Association, with genuine desire to probe, without prejudice, into an unusual phenomenon But what I find is that, not having availed yourself of my invitation to see for yourself what is evident on the subject and to discuss it with us, you go on to diagnose an imagined ailment from which, you say, my wife is suffering, without even seeing her or talking to her to find out the symptoms and without having been asked for your advice or your opinion.

I consider this not only unprofessional, but highly impertinent. I propose to take legal advice on whether what you have said in your letter amounts to defamation or some other penal offence.

-2972

You will recall that you told me on the telephone on the 28th of August that you were sending me a letter which should reach me the next day and that it would be preferable if my wife did not see it Not being aware of what it was about and being suprised at the strange ness of your request I told you at once that I could not commit myself on the point As it happened the letter arrived at my residence on Tuesday the 30th when I was away and in accordance with the practice in my household of letters addressed to either of us being seen by the other, my wife saw your letter before I did Here again you have acted without foresight Your letter naturally infuriated her—firstly because of your presumption *in advancing an opinion, unasked and offensive* and secondly because she had from the start opposed my corresponding with you on the subject which according to her is of no concern of anyone except herself and her household

I trust that since you have written to me on this subject in the name of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association your correspondence with me particularly your last letter to me will be placed before the members of the Association for them to see whether your communication to me in that letter redounds to the credit of the Association

Yours faithfully
Sgd C. Carthigesan

* * *

"Tiruvalla
89 Pamankada Lane,
Colombo 6
8 9 1977

Mr C Carthigesan
69/1 Ward Place,
Colombo 7

Dear Sir

I am in receipt of your letter of September 6

There was no need for me to conduct an investigation in person into the so-called mystery of ash appearing on the picture of Sai Baba because your letter of August 13 gave me the necessary information to detect the person who was responsible for it Had you enough sense to conduct an investigation according to my suggestion

you yourself would have found out the truth, and appreciated my humanitarian intentions.

You have only to blame yourself for not taking precautions to prevent your wife reading my "confidential" letter meant for you alone, disregarding my prior warning. Your statement that my letter infuriated her firstly because of my presumption, and secondly because she had from the start opposed your corresponding with me on the subject, only confirms my findings

I welcome your proposal to take legal action against me, and I request you to expedite it so that I may, before I am no more or physically disabled, get a chance to keep that picture of Sai Baba away from the reach of your wife in the custody of the court, and thus convince numerous gullibles like you that all the reported cases of ash falling from the pictures of Sai Baba are nothing but the secret acts of neurotic or fraudulent persons.

Although I wanted to keep this matter strictly confidential between you and me in the interest of your wife's mental health, I am now compelled to reveal it to the members of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association according to your wish.

Yours sincerely,
Sgd. Abraham T. Kovoor.

Chapter—12

A BIOGRAPHY OF MIRACLES

A mass circulating weekly of Bombay, which has been polluting the minds of its readers by publishing all kinds of fictitious stories to establish occult phenomena as true, has now come out with the story of a porcelain doll getting possessed by the spirit of its former owner, a three-year-old Japanese girl who died long ago The doll is said to have started growing human hair on its head from the time a receptacle containing the ash of the dead girl was kept by its side This phenomenon, according to the writer of the story, proves that the doll is now possessed by the spirit of the dead girl

To give authenticity to the story, the writer says that several "scientists" have examined the hair, and found that it is genuine human hair

Although anyone with commonsense will take it only as a fictitious story, most gullibles will be prepared to accept it as a genuine one, especially as some "scientists" have confirmed it It is not likely for a genuine scientist to confirm that human hair is growing from the head of the lifeless doll merely by finding that the hair taken from the head of the doll is that of a human being It is as foolish as saying that sheep's wool is growing from a woollen blanket just because the wool taken from the blanket is found to be genuine sheep wool

If hair is to grow from the head of a doll there should be blood supply to that head The matter necessary for the growth of hair on the body of a man or animal has to be brought to its skin through its blood If genuine scientists had examined this doll they would surely have tested whether the hair is really growing from the head or merely pasted to it as in all dolls They would have tested whether blood is present in the skin of the doll According to this journal's story no such tests were conducted

If there is blood in the body of the doll to enable hair to grow on its head, it should also have physiological functions like nutrition, respiration, blood circulation excretion etc These vitally important points never went into the muddled head of either the writer of this fictitious story or the editor who published it Such reasoning will never occur to the thousands of gullibles who are prepared to accept that disembodied spirits of dead persons will have bodies and hair on their heads! But for people who are foolish enough to believe the false story of blood oozing from the toe, and hair growing on the face and head of the corpse of St Francis Xavier, there is no difficulty in believing this fictitious story

There is the Madurai Mathadhipathi Somasundara Desikar to confirm that the late Annadurai made two speeches after his death

There is Adam Smith to confirm that he got into a flying saucer and had a talk with the spacemen I wonder in what language they conversed!!!

It is a usual technique adopted by writers of this type of cock-and bull stories to give authenticity to their stories by citing the testimonies of some "scientists" and making them credible

There was Dr Andrija Puharich of New York to confirm that the Israeli magician Uri Geller was able to perform "miracles" as the result of his ability to get psychic powers from computerised minds thirteen million light years away in space

There is Dr S Bhagavantham in India to confirm that the juggler Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthy is performing "miracles" by divine power as he is the incarnation of god

There was Dr J B Rhine of Duke University, North Carolina to confirm through his "researches" that some gifted persons and a gifted horse belonging to Mrs Fonda of Virginia possessed telepathic, clairvoyant, psychokinetic and precognitive powers

There were some doctors in Indonesia to confirm that the foetus in the womb of a Muslim woman in Jakarta has the ability to recite verses from the Koraan

There was Dr G Venkata Rao of Bangalore to confirm that Sai Krishna of Pandavapura had the power to perform 'miracles' as he was the incarnation of Sri Krishna

While unscientific scientists are there in plenty to confirm such types of fictitious stories there are genuine scientists to debunk them Investigations conducted by James Randi exposed Uri Geller's fraud

Prof John Scarne exposed that the trick behind the telepathic and clairvoyant performance of J B Rhine's psychic horse was the secret signals given by the owner of the horse Mrs Fonda

The genuine scientists of Bangalore University exposed the fraud behind Sai Krishna's so-called miracles

A scientist of Indonesia exposed the fact that the Koraan reciting foetus in the womb of the Muslim woman was just a miniature tape recorder concealed under a pillow wrapped round her belly beneath her flowing gown.

Similarly investigations by genuine scientists of India will one day expose Sathya Sai Baba's fraud Sai Baba's days as an "avathar" are numbered under the newly amended constitution of India One of the ten clauses of the Fundamental Duties says 'It is the duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry and reform"

This clause in the constitution will enable the rationalists of India to perform their "fundamental duties" in conducting scientific enquiries into the so-called miracles of Sai Baba and other crooks Although there is no legal provision to compel a citizen to perform his duty, legal action can be taken against charlatans for objecting to citizens performing their fundamental duties

As a humanist, I will die a happy man if, before my death the millions of my fellow humans are saved from the exploitation of these hoaxers by exposing their fraud!

Chapter—13

OF EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia is the merciful act of painlessly terminating the life of an organism suffering from an incurable disease or wound. Though there is no objection in practising euthanasia on animals, it is prohibited in the case of men. This is due to the fallacious Judaic, Christian and Islamic beliefs that, unlike animals, man alone was created by hand from clay, and life was blown into it through the nostrils by God. Thus, according to them, God alone has the right to take life from man. In countries dominated by the influences of these religions, doctors are not allowed to practice euthanasia even with the written permission of the suffering patient.

In Sri Lanka and India where the majority of people believe in rebirth, euthanasia should be considered as a meritorious act that should be encouraged. It is more sensible for those who believe in rebirth to prohibit the present practice of doctors prolonging the life by medication of a person suffering from an incurable disease than prohibiting euthanasia, because by medication the doctors are only delaying the sick men's chance of discarding their deceased bodies to be reborn in younger and healthier bodies.

Once I witnessed the cruel act of a doctor administering oxygen to a cancer patient struggling between life and death. Probably his religious upbringing did not make him realize the cruelty of his act of making the dying person suffer a few more hours. How sensible it would have been if, instead of administering oxygen, he had given the patient an overdose of a sleeping drug.

On another occasion a doctor of very low intelligence was triumphantly boasting about the success he and his alcoholic doctor son achieved in reviving a lady who was in a deep coma as the result of cancer in her lungs, by

giving her glucose drip Although I told him that I would not like such a cruel act to be done even to my pet dog the foolish doctor, who was obsessed by his religious de lusions continued to boast about how he and his drunk ard son succeeded in keeping the sick lady conscious until her death

The cancer specialist who was told that his patient was in a state of coma was happy to know that she was not able to feel any pain during the last hours of her life He said that nature was doing what he himself would have done if the law permitted He was thoroughly an noyed at the uncalled for interference of the two mis guided quacks in making his patient suffer for a few more days

My 80-year old body has cancer in its bladder, and as a result of it I am suffering from frequent haematuria In view of my old age my doctors have ruled out sur- gery and radiotherapy They are treating me by chemo therapy and blood transfusion in an attempt to keep me alive for a few more weeks or months, and not years They have succeeded a good deal in this respect, and I am thankful to them I am able to attend to my normal work although at a lesser scale

Before long when I am bedridden and become useless to my fellow beings and myself, I will not permit my good doctors to prolong my life and suffering any more Unfortunately, my doctors are prevented by an antediluvian law from terminating my suffering by putting me to sleep permanently even if I request them to do so

My rational mind will not permit me to eat the so- called holy ash given by the juggler Sai Baba, or drink my urine every morning as curative medicines for cancer at the advice of gullible Sai Baba devotees and Sri Mor- arji Desai!

My only hope of escaping the forthcoming agony is in some of my sincere friends who foolishly believe in re- birth even though there is no evidence for it I appeal to them to compassionately help me to put an end to my suffering by getting me a liberal supply of sleeping tablets when I am completely bedridden

It being a meritorious karma they need not hesitate to violate an outmoded law In addition to helping me to get rid of my cancerous body to be reborn into a healthy young body, they themselves will be adding one more merit to their credit Even Mahatma Gandhi did not hesitate to break laws for doing good for his fellow men.

Chapter—14

IS ASTROLOGY SCIENTIFIC?

In his article under the caption "Is Astrology Scientific?", published in the Sunday issue of the Times of India, Mr. V. V. Bhujle makes an effort to convince the readers that astrology should not be condemned as a superstition until it is proved so by empirical tests. He is prepared to accept astrology as a true "science" because it was believed all over the world from ancient times, and among the believers there were and are eminent scientists In support of his belief in astrology Bhujle writes:—

> It may be noted that in the 14th century a number of universities in Western Europe, among them Paris, Bologne and Florence had chairs of astrology ... Astrology is regaining a large popular following ... Educated people in the West, especially in the United States, ask each other what sign they were born under. Astrological literature is flourishing as never before... It is difficult to deny the fact that there are many scientists and investigators who are quietly gathering astrological data and testing them in various fields... And the possibility that astrology may as well undergo a transformation from the traditional view to the modern empirical one cannot be ruled out.... Carl Jung endorses the validity of astrological phenomena Professor Jung certainly knew the origin and anatomy of superstitious beliefs better than those scientists who brand astrology as nothing more than a superstition... There was never a scientific attempt made to substantiate the statement that astrology is an exploded superstition.... Before astrology can be condemned, its validity or otherwise should be empirically tested.

False Concept

Mr. Bhujle should realise that a false concept will never become right just because the majority of people believe it, or because it is believed from ancient times, or because there are eminent scientists among the believers.

Astrology originated when man's knowledge of astronomy and the universe was wrong. Hence, astrological calculations were and are made on wrong data. Of the nine planets (navagraha) of astrologers only five are real planets. Of the remaining four, one is a star and another a satellite. The remaining two do not exist at all! How can conclusions derived from wrong data be true?

Astrological charts are prepared according to the relative visual positions of the so-called planets in the twelve zodiacal constellations at the time of the birth of a person. As the solar planets and the zodiacal stars are millions of miles away from the earth their visual positions at any moment are only virtual and not real. In preparing the chart for a person astrologers make use of the wrong virtual positions of the planets. If they have the knowledge and ability to calculate and find the real positions of the planets through astronomical calculations, perhaps astrologers themselves will lose faith in their cult!

Since light from planets and stars takes several minutes to millions of years to reach the earth, it is clear that astrologers' charts are wrong by several minutes to millions of years!!

Blind belief in astrology on the ground that Newton and Carl Jung believed it is as absurd as drinking urine as a curative medicine on the ground that Morarji Desai does so!

Mr Bhujle says that it is the responsibility of scientists to prove their negative statements concerning astrology. It was exactly for this purpose that I included astrology and palmistry among the 23 items of my fifteen-year-old permanent challenge, and offered an award of one lakh Sri Lanka rupees to those who could make 95 per cent or more correct predictions in a test to be conducted by me. Although I do not share Bhujle's view that it is the duty of scientists to prove or disprove things that do not exist, I ventured to do so because astrology and palmistry have

become a curse to society like all other superstitions Can Mr Bhujle persuade even a single astrologer or palmist to face my test? I have conducted this test on many occasions and found that astrologers and palmists cannot make better predictions than laymen who can only guess!

Latest Exposure

The latest empirical test on astrology and palmistry I *conducted was on February 12, 1978*

On reading a news item in the Ceylon Sunday Observer that a Sri Lankan, who has a flourishing business in London as a fortune teller, succeeded in finding oil in Ghana by looking at the palm print of the President of Ghana ,I wondered whether the Government of Sri Lanka could make use of this man while he was on a holiday here, to locate oil in Sri Lanka by looking at the palm of President Mr J R Jeyewardene!

Provoked by this fictitious and fantastic claim I challenged through the same paper this palmist-cum astrologer Mr Cyrus Abeyakoon and all other astrologers and palmists in Sri Lanka to face a test I proposed to conduct at Thurstan College Hall on February 12 1978 To make it attractive for them I offered to pay my usual award of one lakh rupees to those who get 95 per cent or more correct answers Some of those who advertise regularly about their ability to make correct predictions from dates of births or palm prints also were invited by letters to take part in the test

Four fortunetellers responded and informed me that they would be coming to take part in the test A fifth person telephoned me and said that he would like to demonstrate publicly his power of healing through prayers to Jesus Christ Since faith healing was one of the 23 items of my permanent challenge he too was asked to come

Thurstan College Hall was fully packed by spectators on February 12 long before the scheduled time Sharp at 5 p m the proceedings started with a preliminary talk by me about the origin and evolution of witchcrafts and occultism and the reason why I had to throw out a permanent challenge against all those who claimed occult

and miraculous powers. Thereafter astrologers and palmists were asked to come on to the stage and take their seats. Only one palmist and the faith-healer came up, although there were several fortune-tellers in the hall! I am sure readers will be intelligent enough to understand why those fellows who earn rupees five and ten from the public by telling their fortunes rejected my offer of one lakh! Knowing very well that they had no chance of winning my award, they did not want to risk their future practice by exposing their bluff!!

A layman from the audience was requested to come up and take his seat with the others. First I introduced the faithhealer to the audience, and then requested him to keep on praying to remove a black mole at the base of my nose, while I got on with the test on palmistry. I could have asked him to pray to Jesus to heal the cancer in my bladder. But, since there was no possibility of showing the result to the audience without conducting a biopsy, I preferred the former.

While the prayer of the faithhealer was going on, I pulled out two sealed envelopes from my file. One of them contained the palmprints of both palms of ten persons prepared at my request by the Sri Lanka police, and a similar sealed cover containing the identity of the ten persons with their sex and whether they were alive or dead, attested by a responsible police officer. The other sealed cover contained a sheet of paper giving the dates and times of birth, correct to the minute, of ten persons together with the latitudes and longitudes of the places of their birth. Another sealed cover contained the necessary information about the sex and longevity of the ten persons, attested by the respective living persons, and close relatives of the dead.

I broke open the seal of the first cover before the public, and gave the ten numbered palmprints, first to the palmist, and later to the layman. They were asked to mark on papers supplied which of them were males, females, dead and living.

Two journalists from the audience were called up to the stage to mark the correct answers by comparing with the attested copy supplied by the police officer. The pal-

Chapter—15

BUDDHIST COSMOLOGY

Unlike extinct and extant religions, Buddhist philosophy with its scientific doctrine of anathma, absence of a creator god, and recognition of organic evolution, together with its excellent moral precepts, is more rational than any other. Any attempt to give it false props by intellectual jugglery of distorting facts is liable to do more harm than good to Buddhism.

Clear and rational way of thinking of Gautama the Buddha made him revolt against the superstitious beliefs and practices of the Brahminical religion of his time. It is unfortunate that after his death, most of the things he condemned and discarded have crept back into Buddhism and Buddhist scriptures. These "scriptures" were written long after Lord Buddha's death by "disciples" most of whom were Brahmins. Thus, it is not surprising that a lot of Brahminical myths and concepts, which the Master had discarded, crept back into the Suttras and Jataka stories.

It is from such "sacred" writings that Prof. K. N. Jayatilleke was trying to propound a new brand of science comprising "Buddhist Cosmology", "Buddhist Psychology", "Buddhist Atomic Theory" etc., by giving farfetched interpretations and suitable distortions.

We quote below certain passages from Prof. K. N. Jayatilleke's talks broadcast by the C.B.C.:

> It is with original Buddhism that we get for the first time in the history of thought a conception of the universe, which can in any way be meaningfully compared with the modern picture of the universe as we know it in contemporary astronomy. This is all the more remarkable when we find no other such conception, which foreshadowed or forestalled mo-

dern discoveries in ancient or medieval thought of the East or West

In the Agganna Suthra it is said that the earth in its earliest state was in a fiery condition, and when the earth cooled a scum formed on the earth, just as the scum is formed on the rice gruel and the earth's crust became hard. There was no plant or animal on it at that time. Later there appeared plant growth (Bhoomi Pappaththika) on the surface of water and earth And by process of gradual evolution we find plant life first, and then animal life came into existence. (Emphasis ours)

Buddhists and non buddhists, who do not generally read all Buddhist scriptures, are likely to be misled by this university don into the belief that there is nothing in modern astronomy that was not known to Lord Buddha and his disciples We, therefore wrote the following letter to Prof Jayatilleke immediately after reading the excerpt of a broadcast talk by him in the Ceylon Radio Times —

Prof K N Jayatilleke 25 6-1969.
Department of Philosophy,
University of Ceylon,
Peradeniya

Dear friend,

In your article entitled "Buddhist Conception of the Universe" published in the Radio Times (June 1 14 1969) you say, "It is with original Buddhism that we get for the first time in the history of thought a conception of the universe, which can in any way be meaningfully compared with the modern picture of the universe as we know it in contemporary astronomy"

As I am very much interested in this subject I request you to kindly let me know the book chapter and verse where this modern cosmology is described

If what you say is correct, we have every right to be proud of the fact that those Indians who wrote the early Buddhist scriptures had a clear conception of the heliocentric solar system galaxies quasars expanding universe oscillating universe, etc, long before the times of Brahe

Bruno, Copernicus Galileo and others, at a time when the rest of the world held the idea that the universe was *geocentric and homocentric*

Yours sincerely,
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

Though many years have passed, I am still awaiting the reply for this query

Let us see how far Prof Jayatilleke is justified in his fantastic claims in the light of what is actually written *in Buddhist scriptures*

Just like the writers of Christian, Judaic, Hindu and Islamic mythologies the writers of Buddhist scriptures also held the view that the earth was stationary and flat, *with heaven or heavens above, and hell or hells below* What we read about the origin and nature of the world in Buddhist scriptures are borrowed false ideas from Hindu mythology

In the book **The Buddha and his Teachings** by Narada Thero (page 444) we read, "*It should be remembered that* the Buddha did not attempt to expound any cosmological theory"

Thus, it is clear that the responsibility for introducing cosmological myths into Buddhist scriptures falls on those who wrote them long after Lord Buddha's death

The following points from these scriptures are worth mentioning —

1 Nowhere in any Buddhist scripture is it mentioned that the earth is round On the other hand, it is described as a circular floating island 36 lakhs and 10,350 yojanas in circumference, 12 lakhs and 3,450 yojanas in diameter and 24 000 yojanas thick *At its periphery it has a range of mountains 82,000* yojanas high and in the centre the Maha Meru mountain 1 lakh and 68 000 yojanas high The Maha Meru is surrounded by seven smaller mountains of half its height The hell, where the demons live, is at the foot of the Maha Meru, the land of Suras in the middle, and heaven, the land of the 33 gods, at

the top Human beings are in the four continents which lie on the four sides of the Maha Meru

(Mahabodhi Vansa Map in Ceylon Buddhism Vol 2, by D J Gogerly)

2. Nowhere is it mentioned that the "earth was in a fiery condition' at any time

3 Nowhere is it mentioned that "the earth cooled, and a hard crust was formed ' on the surface What is mentioned in the Agganna Suthra is that the earth spread out on the surface of water just like a scum is formed on "the surface of boiled milk rice that is cooling" Here the word "cooling" pertains to the milk and not to the earth!

4 Nowhere in the Agganna Suthra is it mentioned that "plant life came into existence first and then animal life"

5 Nowhere is it mentioned that the earth was orbitting the sun On the other hand, like the scriptures of other religions Agganna Suthra also mentions the sun as 'moving in its course!'

6 According to Agganna Suthra the sun, day and night, and the seasons appeared long after the appearance of the earth and the human beings on it

From these crude mythological ideas it is patently clear that the writers of these "scriptures" were utterly ignorant of any type of astronomy They did not even know the simple mathematics of calculating the circumference of a circle from its diameter!

Considering the fact that the writers of these "scriptures" held the view that the earth had a prior origin than the sun and that Homo sapiens evolved before the formation of the sun, it is rather strange that Prof Jayatilleke had the audacity to say, "It is with original Buddhism that we get for the first time in the history of thought a conception of the universe, which can in any way be meaningfully compared with the modern picture of the universe as we know it in contemporary astronomy"!

It is a case of intellectual manipulation by hiding facts and distorting texts to make a myth fit in well with

modern astronomy, and theories of geological and organic evolution!

> "A single universe is composed of many worlds And there are many universes **Each solar system has its own family of planets,** and many such solar systems form what might be called a Cosmic system Numerous cosmic systems form still greater systems, each having its central sun, and its planetary worlds with their corresponding inhabitants "

The above is a passage from the booklet "BUDDHISM AND SCIENCE" — a collection of broadcast talks given by Mr Egerton C Baptist

It has become a new fashion among religionists to give suitable interpretations to the so-called sacred writings of their religions in order to make them appear "scientific" As a result, we now have Christian science, Buddhist science, Hindu science, Islamic science, etc

We have already seen the vain efforts of Rev Fred de Silva to prop up his crumbling religion by himself creating a *modern version of the Christian God!* But unlike Prof Jayatilleke and Mr Egerton Baptist, Rev de Silva was not doing it by the intellectual jugglery giving false and fantastic interpretations to Biblical scriptures He was simply expounding a theory based entirely on his own beliefs He was sincere enough to state categorically that the belief in a personal God up in the sky who can be won over by offerings, prayers and religious rituals as "depicted in the Holy Bible" is an ecclesiastical build up of many centuries

On the other hand, instead of discarding the outmoded and unscientific myths of the Buddhist Scriptures, the two apologists — Prof Jayatilleke and Mr Baptist — are trying to make scriptures "scientific" by giving false and exaggerated interpretations!

On reading Mr Baptist's quotations about "Buddhist Cosmology" in the booklet **"Buddhism and Science"** I asked him for the original of it in a letter dated 2nd November 1958 After a silence of eleven years on 5th February 1969 I got a letter from Mr Baptist, in which he quoted the so-called "original' from the **"Book of**

Gradual Saying", Vol 2, page 207 I cite the passage below

> As far as moon and sun move in their course and light up all quarters with their radiance, so far extends the thousand fold world System Therein are a thousand moons, a thousand suns, a thousand Sinerus, Lords of mountains a thousand Rose Apple lands a thousand Western Ox-wains, a thousand Northern Kurus, a thousand Eastern Vidahas four thousand mighty Oceans, four Mighty Rulers a thousand four Great Rulers, a thousand heavens of the thirty three Devas of Delight, a thousand Yama worlds, a thousand heavens of the Devas that delight in creations, the same of those Devas that delight in others' creations, and a thousand Brahma worlds This, Ananda is called, "The system of the thousand lesser worlds" A system a thousand fold the size of this is called "The Twice-a-thousand Middling thousandfold World system" A system a thousand fold the size of this is called "The Thrice a-thousand Mighty thousandfold world system" Now, Ananda if he wished it, the Tathagatha could make his voice heard throughout this last named world system or even further, if he chose"

Readers can now check up the genuineness of Mr Baptist's quotation, given within quotation marks, by comparing with the original, which, in fact, is a replica of the Hindu mythology — the bizarre ideas of a paranoid thinker! This type of distortion of facts is deliberately made by these two gentlemen in order to mislead the broadcast listening public into the absurd belief that Buddhist scriptures have in them everything about all branches of modern science!

The Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation, by its religious broadcasts, is aiding such persons to spread false beliefs among the masses This type of intellectual bluff of these so called authorities on Buddhism is in a class with the efforts of some Christian and Islamic apologists who try to explain that the six-days' creation mentioned in their scriptures, is in perfect harmony with the modern con-

" Organic Evolution!!

"Buddhism is the only religion which will never be disputed or disproved in the light of advancing scientific knowledge, which has correctly been described in Buddhist teachings as limitless, were not new to Buddhism Besides, Jataka stories are full of air travel by enlightened pupils of the Buddha called Arahants, while Buddha himself performed the feat which would perhaps be the greatest miracle if it is said that a human being travelled by air unsupported and unprotected by any other external power"

This was said by the Ven. Diviyagaha Gunananda Thera, Principal, Shastrodaya University Pirivena, Matara"

(The Sun)

Considering the reality of space travel today it may be of interest to note that in the Buddhist texts it is recorded that Maha Moggalana, a disciple of the Buddha who was endowed with psychic powers, travelled not merely from one planet to another, but from one world system to the other without the aid of any mechanical device

(Alec Robertson in the **Ceylon Observer**)

Probably these two gentlemen have not heard about the performance of similar feats by Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohamed, Prophet Elijah and our ten headed King Ravana!

After Prof Jayatilleke and Egerton Baptist two more Sri Lankans —Alec Robertson and H S.S Nissanka — have found modern astronomy clearly expounded in the Anguttara Nikaya The text on which these two Buddhist "astronomers" base their theory is given below for the benefit of the readers —

Then venerable Ananda sitting on one side spoke to the Bhagavan (Buddha) "Lord I have heard from you and have accepted the fact in your presence Abhibhu the disciple standing on the world of Brahma caused his voice to be heard a thousand chakkavala How far can the Bhagawan cause his voice to be heard?"

"Abhibhu was a disciple but Thatagatha's powers are innumerable Have you heard of the thousand smaller chakkavala As far as the glittering sun and the moon revolve in their course lighting up the divisions One thousand such distance is a lokadathu In one thousand of these lokadathu there are a thousand moons, a thousand suns, a thousand Meru kings of mountains, a thousand Jambudeepas, a thousand aparagoyana, a thousand uttarakuru, a thousand pubbvideha, four thousand great seas, four thousand guardian Gods, a thousand catuma haraju heavens, a thousand taratinga heavens a thousand Yama heavens a thousand tasita heavens, a thousand nimmanarati heavens, a thousand purimmi tasa raratti heavens, a thousand Brahma worlds

"Ananda, this is called thousand smaller chakkavala, one thousand of these thousand smaller chakkavala is called a divisahasi majjima lokadathu Thousand of these majjima lokadathu is called a tisahasi or mahasahasi lokadathu

"Ananda, the Thatagatha can cause his voice to be heard in tisahasi lokadathu, or still farther if he chooses"

"Lord how can the Bhagawan cause his voice to be heard in a tisahasi mahasahasi lokadathu or still farther if he chooses?"

"The Thatagatha emits a luminous appearance (of his body) to the tisahasi lokadathu, and when the beings there see this appearance the Thatagatha raises his voice and cause it to be heard amongst them Ananda, this is the way in which the Thatagatha causes his voice to be heard in the tisahasi lokadathu or still farther if he chooses"

It is this type of ludicrous statements that is cited as "clear proof" to show that Lord Buddha's knowledge of cosmology 25 centuries ago was in perfect accordance with modern astronomy Has the 2500-years old Anguttara Nikaya, which according to Alec Robertson and Prof · Jayatilleke, "describes modern astronomy in clear

terms", found a place in the reference library of any observatory in the world?

Even though astronomers have no chance of making any new discovery through the help of Anguttara Nikaya, Buddhist cosmologists like Alec Robertson and H.S.S. Nissanka are sure to find suitable passages in Buddhist scriptures where all future astronomical discoveries are recorded! Since scientists are not clever enough to find modern astronomy in scriptural passages, it is necessary for observatories to employ Buddhist cosmologists like Alec Robertson to direct astronomers in their researches according to the cosmology given in Buddhist scriptures!!

Chapter—16

BLAVATSKY, OLCOTT, BESANT AND THEOSOPHY

Theosophy, a cult that sprang into being in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and that no scandal schism or strife has been able wholly to destroy exemplifies the attraction of the feebleminded towards the arcane and the esoteric Today, the "Hindu pseudo science of Theosophy', as the historian Arnold Toynbee called it has tens of thousands of adherents in America, Great Britain and India, with smaller groups elsewhere, including Sri Lanka Its founder Helena Patrovna Blavatsky was the most influential magician ever lived The history of Mme Blavatsky is obscure before the year 1874 when at the age of 43 she met Henry Steel Olcott at a spiritualistic seance in Vermont Although the version of her earlier life given by theosophical writers is mostly fiction some facts about her background are known

She was born in 1831 in the Ukraine to a Russian army officer Helena grew up as a problem child, sickly despite a robust build, wilful and given to tantrums At seventeen she was jilted by a Prince Gelitsin Rebounding from the prince she married General Nicephore Blavatsky Vice Governor of Erivan Province Three months later she ran off to her grandfather, who promptly shipped her to Odessa to meet her father On the way she eloped with the skipper of the ship to Constantinople She next appeared in Cairo where she met Albert Rawson an American scholar Rawson, a collector of oriental lore spent three nights with her in the Great Pyramid He introduced Helena to the famous coptic magician Paulos Metamon A three months' training under this magician was the nearest thing to a formal education Helena ever had

During this stay in Cairo she began to stimulate her visions with marijuana, to which she remained addicted

the rest of her life. Returning to Constantinople, Helena became first a hireback rider in a circus, and then a mistress to a Slavonian opera singer—Agardi Metrovitch She may have married him bigamously for Metrovitch in a letter to her grandfather introduced himself as his grandson A few years later Helena's grandparents received a similar letter from an Englishman saying that he had married their granddaughter, and had taken her on a trip to America They also heard that she was associated in Paris with D D Home in spiritualistic mediumship

After ten years of roaming about, Helena returned to her long-suffering relatives in Russia, and fascinated local society by feats of mediumship Although she was persuaded to join her husband Blavatsky, the reconciliation was very brief, because Metrovitch turned up on a singing engagement, and Helena eloped with him again

In 1862, Mme Blavatsky retired to the wilds of the caucasus and gave birth to a hunchbacked son of doubtful paternity The child died in its infancy In 1871, Metrovitch and his mistress Helena set out to Cairo The ship was wrecked on the way, and Metrovitch died leaving his mistress Fished out of the Mediteranean, Helena settled in Cairo with a boarding house keeper, Emma Cutting She made use of her magical training to form a "Societe Spitite", and hoped that mediums from far and near would join her in psychic adventures But the group broke up when a materialised hand floating about in the dark, turned out to be a cotton stuffed glove! Disappointed, Helena went back to her relations in Russia, but soon ended up in quarrels She moved on to Paris, and later in 1873 she set out to New York to make a fresh start While able to turn her versatile hand to a host of occupations, she never grew rich At one stage she was compelled to engage in making neckties and artificial flowers to make a living When her father died she received a small legacy She spent it on her high living and lost the last 1,000 dollars by buying an unsuccessful chicken farm

In 1874 she read an article by Henry Steel Olcott on the spiritualistic feats of a pair of rustic Vermont mediums Olcott, a bearded lawyer from New Jersey, was a

year younger to Helena During the civil war he was assigned the job of investigating frauds in Army contracts He did this job so well that he ended the war as a Colonel

Colonel Olcott's spiritualistic interest attracted Helena to him She had no difficulty in scraping up an acquaintance with Olcott for he could overlook her red shirt her cigarettes her massive build her frizzy mop of light brown hair, her loud deep voice and her Russian accent She captivated Olcott with her creepy tales of spiritualistic past She gave him several seances

Next Helena dashed off to Philadelphia, where she set on house-keeping with a young immigrant from Caucasus—Michael C. Betanelly—whose importing business was on the brink of bankruptcy When Olcott planned to visit her, she found it wiser to marry her new lover Betanelly After two adventures in bigamy, Helena was not enthusiastic about a third Betanelly eventually divorced Helena

Returning to New York, Helena persuaded Olcott to desert his wife and children in order to take an apartment in Manhattan with her Although Olcott and Helena always insisted that their relationship was purely platonic Mrs Olcott, unconvinced, sued her husband for divorce

The partnership thus begun proved to be a brilliant move for both His genius complimented hers Helena Blavatsky's occult glamour caught the fish, while Olcott's business ability cleaned them for frying Gradually Blavatsky decided to become something better than a spirit medium She began to draw upon her Egyptian experiences She claimed that she obtained spirit messages during seances through spirit contacts and adepts of Egypt These adepts added much to Blavatsky's stature as a magician If anything went wrong with her prophesies those adepts could be blamed These supernatural partners helped her to exalt herself and browbeat her followers When she needed time to compose a reply to a questioner, she pretended to be consulting the non existing Adepts Olcott and Blavatsky entertained such men as the Rev J H Wiggin who later became Mrs Eddy's ghost writer, William Quan Judge and Thomas Edison

who had been experimenting to see if he could swing a pendulum by will power

On September 7, 1875 they formed a club with Olcott as president One member suggested the name Theosophy' That night the Theosophical Society was formed with Olcott Felt and Judge as president vice-president and secretary respectively Even though no spirits manifested many strange things grew out of these meetings In 1877 Blavatsky brought out her first book **Isis Uncovered** Some reviewers called it 'a large dish of hash and others discarded it as 'rubbish Blavatsky scrambled together in this book the folklores and philosophies of the West and the occult and mythological beliefs of the East

Each year Blavatsky added some new ingredients to her theosophical credo Eventually her teachings included bits and pieces from practically all the magical disciplines —alchemy astrology Kabbalism numerology necromancy prophesy spiritualism ectoplasm as well as such Indian concepts as reincarnation Karma and an invisible brotherhood of Mahatmas

Although the first edition of **Isis Uncovered** was sold out within ten days the royalties were not enough for the couple to live on Olcott was hard up his law practice ruined by his notoriety and the fact that he had taken part in cremating a dead body for the first time in Christian America

Blavatsky put pressure on Olcott by means of supernatural letters from the Adepts commanding him to go to India Olcott wrote to Dayananda Saraswati in Bombay the founder of the Arya Samaj a society created to modernise the Hindu religion He convinced the Indian that the aims of the societies were the same On the arrival of the Theosophical twins as they now called themselves in Bombay in 1878 they were given a grand reception by Dayanand Saraswati and the members of the Arya Samaj They were delighted until their host presented them with a staggering bill for all the entertainments

On a tour of North India Blavatsky secretly hired a servant gifted in performing magic who haunted the party with mysterious voices and with miraculous letters

to Olcott encouraging him in his divine mission The twins' association with Dayananda Saraswati broke off with mutual recriminations By this time Blavatsky was disillusioned with the magic and spirituality of the East, and decided to create her own brand The twins risked their remaining capital to start a magazine **The Theosophist.** It was an instant success They acquired not only several well to-do Indian followers but also the eminent Alfred Percy Sinnet, a newspaper editor interested in spiritualism and Allan Octavian Hume, a well-known civil servant who later inspired the Indian National Congress

Back in Bombay, Blavatsky met Emma Cutting her old friend and spiritualist from Cairo, awaiting her with her new husband — a Frenchman called Coulomb — who had come from Ceylon where his business had failed, leaving him in dire straits Blavatsky put Mme Coulomb in charge of the house, and made Coulomb the handyman While in India, her claim was that she was in contact with spirits, through the medium of the Mahatmas of Tibet and the Himalayas At Simla, Blavatsky captivated the British Indian Society by spiritualistic tricks Hume was so bewitched that he gave up his job to go to Tibet to meet the Mahatmas in person Sometimes in Blavatsky's presence eerie sounds of astral bells would be heard high up near the ceiling or travelling about the dark room She claimed that the bells indicated the presence of a Tibetan Mahatma in the room Raps on furniture or on the wall supposedly from the spirits were also heard She even produced raps on the bald heads of high government officials present at a seance

The restless and gullible Colonel Olcott travelled about to spread the word He established branches of the Society throughout India and Ceylon, and gained thousands of converts. Occasionally he bumped into a Mahatma Koot Hoomi, a Tibetan Mahatma the credulous Colonel encountered one night was described as tall, handsome and benign Koot Hoomi disappeared into thin air after giving him certain advice Not everybody believed everything Sinnet gave Blavatsky a letter to forward to Koot

Hoomi asking that he materialise a copy of **The London Times** in India on the day of publication Blavatsky produced a reply from Koot Hoomi saying that Mahatmas shunned notoriety Once on a picnic it was found that the cups and saucers were in short Blavatsky told a picnicker to dig into a small mound Lo, there was the needed crockery Everyone gasped, except one suspicious guest who found the mound made of freshly heaped up earth

Sinnet wrote a small book entitled **The Occult World** in which he described his occult experiences with Blavatsky He and Hume spent two fascinating months in Simla with Blavatsky While the two quizzed Blavatsky about the secret doctrines of Theosophy, she entertained them with reminiscences about the Mahatmas miraculous letters from the Adepts, and evasive replies to their questions Hume, however, gradually drifted away from the society, but his loss was compensated by two useful Indian converts — Subha Rao and Mohini Chatterjee At the end of 1882, on funds supplied by rich converts in India and Ceylon the Theosophical headquarters were transferred to an estate at Adayar near Madras The upper storey of the bungalow was solely occupied by Blavatsky and her accomplice Coulomb She partitioned off a small part of the chamber to form the occult room, in which was installed a wooden shrine This shrine was covered off by thick curtains Few people knew that a hole communicated from the bedroom through the back of the shrine. A sliding panel in the back of a wardrobe allowed a reaching hand of Coulomb to deposit letters from the so-called Mahatmas into the shrine On ceremonial occasions, the faithful gathered before the curtains Blavatsky drew the curtains back and opening the doors of the cabinet, displayed the gifts of the Mahatmas from Tibet, whose pictures decorated the cabinet doors During the next year, Adayar tingled with psychic phenomena. Mahatmas' letters fell on the heads of visitors or appeared in the shrine.' More rarely, spirits in their astral bodies or ectoplasmic images glided through the starlit garden Once when Mme Coulomb dutifully

opened the shrine a saucer fell out and lay shattered at the foot of a General Morgan an Army officer

Sinnet lost his job as editor because of his occult ob session He returned to English in 1883, wrote another book, **Esoteric Buddhism,** and became active in the London Theosophical Society Blavatsky and Olcott decided to follow him to England However, with the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in London things did not go well for them in England The researchers of the SPR were friendly enough, but they found their subjects evasive and difficult Blavatsky displayed her terrible temper whenever any statement of hers was questioned Inevitably members of the SPR became suspicious

Meanwhile the storm was blowing up at Adayar While the Coulombs denied the trustees of the Theosophical Society access to the occult room they accused the couple of embezzling the Society's funds Finally, the trustees expelled the Coulombs from the compound Mme Coulomb threatened to publish 40 Blavatsky letters which gave directions for producing magical effects Seeking refuge with the Christian Missionaries at the Madras Christian College the Coulombs turned the letters to a newspaper writer, who published them in an article A summary of these exposures reached European newspapers Olcott hurried back to India

Mme Blavatsky followed at a more leisurely pace, accompanied by a middle-aged ex curate—Charles W Leadbeater—who became the evil genius of the cult, and succeeded Blavatsky after her death He is described by Sprague de Camp and Catherine de Camp the joint authors of the book **Spirits, Stars and Spells** as a homosexual with sadistic tendencies

On hearing the published reports the Society for Psychical Research in London despatched to Adayar a young Cambridge graduate Richard Hodgson Hodgson who arrived at Adayar four days before Blavatsky, questioned the Coulombs and checked their statements He also found that Olcott and the Theosophists who lived in the compound told inconsistent and untruthful stories He learned how several of the magical tricks were worked When at last he was allowed to see the occult room he found the wall newly plastered and the shrine gone Hodg-

son submitted samples of Blavatsky's handwriting and some of Mahatma's letters to a team of handwriting experts, who reported that Blavatsky had written most of the letters, and Damodar, one of the Indian converts the rest

After further recriminations and threat of libel suits, Blavatsky's followers shipped her off to Europe In March 1885, she left the shores of Ind a for good leaving behind a Hindu Theosophical Society in India, and a Buddhist Theosophical Society in Ceylon

After a sojourn in Europe, Blavatsky settled down in England There, Mme Annie Wood Besant, a forty one year old talented woman, who had already had enough careers, came in contact with Blavatsky Years before Mrs Besant had left her clergyman husband to become a professional crusader for atheism, feminism birth control socialism and spiritualism Annie Besant was so captivated by Blavatsky that she dropped her former associates Charles Bradlaugh, Bernard Shaw and others gave up her passionate crusades, and devoted herself to Theosophy and its founder She became Blavatsky's appointed successor In 1891, while Mrs Besant was on a trip to America, Blavatsky caught influenza and died quietly, surrounded by the faithful In Sprague de Camp's language, with all her lies, lovers marijuana, mahatmas, sliding panels and all, Blavatsky remains one of the most fascinating amusing and in her own perverse way, endearing figures in the whole rogues' gallery of magic

No sooner was Blavatsky cremated, than a furious struggle broke out among Olcott, Mrs Besant and William Q Judge There were accusations of stealing Blavatsky's effects of faking Mahatma letters and of Olcott's misconduct with a woman member After the usual exposes, and waves of resignations, Judge formed the schismic Theosophic Society in America Since then there have been further schisms Some of these splinter groups have died out Others have endured down to the present. In 1893 Annie Besant came to India She was soon recognised as Blavatsky's successor by most Theosophists, although Olcott retained the presidentship till his death in 1907 Mrs Besant embraced Hinduism and even de-

fended its practice of widowburning and temple prostitution. She worked towards the revival of Indian nationalism and served a year as President of the Indian National Congress *founded by Hume—a Theosophist who left it* disillusioned

From 1905 on Leadbeater who was in charge of the Theosophical Headquarters at Adayar, was in legal difficulties over his homosexual relations with various boys he tutored When an investigation disclosed that for occult reasons he had been encouraging the sons of Theosophists to practice self-abuse, Leadbeater was prevailed upon to resign from the society However he soon glided back into Annie Besant's favour Not being psychic herself, she needed him, for occult inspiration

It was Leadbeater's idea to deify a young Brahmin boy —Jadu Krishnamoorthi Fourteen-year-old Krishnamoorthi was more or less kidnapped from his parents, educated in England and France, and presented to the Theosophical world by Annie Besant, as the coming Messiah In 1927, however, at a camp meeting in the Netherlands, Krishnamoorthi revolted He told his stunned disciples that he was not a messiah, and that ceremonies, dogmas Gods, priesthood and organizat ons were pointless and that everybody must seek the truth himself He withdrew from Theosophy to his estate in California, save for an occasional tour, to bring to study groups in various parts of the world, his modest message

The apotheosis of Krishnamoorthi caused a wave of resignations 2,400 theosophists of Central Europe, broke away under Rudolf Steiner Steiner called his new organization, the Anthroposophical Society, with its headquarters in Switzerland

Mrs Besant, grown old, and subdued by her adversaries, died in 1933 Leadbeater followed her the following year After the usual plots and intrigues the leadership of the Theosophical Society passed into other hands

In addition to their influence on present day Theosophical societies, Blavatsky's teachings—especially the myth of the hierarchy of the hidden Masters and Mahatmas—have been copied, paraphrased, or absorbed by a multitude of other magical cults and sects These cults

constantly appear and vanish, under such names, as Rosicrucians,, Christian mystics, Christian scientists, scientologists, Subudhists, Babaists, Pentecostalists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Bahais, Hare Krishnas, Divine Light Society, Ananda Marg, Transcendental Meditators, Seventh Day Adventists, etc Often the organisers are merely trying to repeat Helena Blavatsky's stunning success

We have to learn a lesson from the meddlesome Mahatmas, Gurus, Masters and Babas Wisdom lies neither in the occult room at Adayar nor in the Bhajana halls of Sai Baba and Rajmushi Wisdom cannot be bought by surrendering one's integrity and intelligence to the will of some wizard Wisdom is the slow amalgam of knowledge gained by study, verification and observation, when it is intelligently applied to the situations we meet in the world we live in Those who seek a magical shortcut to wisdom, stand to lose their character, their judgment, their possessions and even their sanity Magic is the mother of all religions

Chapter—17

THE MATARA REBIRTH CASE— FACT OR FICTION?

In April 1977 the three newspapers—the Sun, the Weekend and the Riviresa—owned by the Independent Newspapers Ltd of Ceylon published under banner headlines the rebirth story of the late Mr Francis Kodituwakku, a clerk of the Matara Kachcheri 'It was reported *that Kodituwakku, who died in his 52nd year on* April 16, 1973, is at present living as a three-year old boy in a house some 300 yards away from his former house at Kandagoda in Matara

According to the newspaper reports several investigators, including some Buddhist monks, confirmed the genuineness of this rebirth story The newspapers said that the reborn child was subjected to vigorous questioning by several expert rebirth researchers, and all the statements of the child regarding his previous life as Francis Kodituwakku, his former w fe and children, and all his friends at the Matara Kachcheri were found to be absolutely correct on being checked

On reading the newspaper account of this rebirth story we decided that an investigation should be conducted by the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association for the benefit of its members and the public Thus, Mr and Mrs Amunugoda Tillekeratne were deputed to conduct such an investigation and report their findings

On May 13, 1977, an investigation was conducted by a party of five persons, including some clerks of the Matara Kachcheri with Mr Amunugoda Tillekeratne as the leader Following persons were interviewed by the party (1) Mrs Sumanawathi Kodituwakku, wife of Francis Kodituwakku, (2) Mr H P Sugathapala, father of the reborn child, (3) Messrs M A. Gunawantha, W. A Anadasa, T C Amadoru, and Mahinda Ranaweera, all of them clerks at the Matara Kachcheri and close

friends of the late Francis Kodituwakku, (4) Three of the six children of the late Francis Kodituwakku, and (5) The reborn child himself

At the time of the investigation the reborn child was three years and six months old It was found that the boy was born 7 months after the death of Francis Kodituwakku

The party went first to the Matara Kachcheri The Government Agent of Matara gave the party all the necessary assistance to conduct their investigations

After collecting necessary information about Francis Kodituwakku from his erstwhile co workers the party went to the house of the reborn child Mr Tillekeratne and wife took with them their young children and a quantity of fresh grapes with the aim of making the so-called reborn child feel at ease during the questioning After prolonged questioning at home the boy was taken first to the house of the late Francis Kodituwakku and then to the Matara Kachcheri The boy was not a stranger in these two places as he had been taken to these places several times by several investigators On all these occasions the father of the boy Mr Sugathapala too went with his son

The questions put to the reborn child and his answers are given below with comments of the investigating party wherever needed

Q. What is your name?
A. Francis Kodituwakku
Q What is your age?
A. 49 (Francis Kodituwakku died in his 52nd year, and the boy at present is 3 years and 6 months)
Q Are you married?
A. Yes
Q. How do you know that you are 49?
A. I do not know
Q You have studied up to what standard?
A. I do not know
Q. Do you have children?
A. Yes
Q. You have more sons or daughters?
A. More daughters
Q. How many sons?

A. Much
Q. Can you give their names?
A. Susitha Patiya
Q. Who is the youngest?
A. I do not know
Q. What is the name of your wife?
A. I do not know
Q. Had you any job?
A. I do not know I will tell you later
Q. What is your mother's name?
A. Evelin Wadisinha (This is his present mother's name)
Q. What did you do with your salary?
A. I lost it
Q. How did you go to office daily?
A. I had a motor cycle
Q. What was the make of the motor cycle?
A. I do not know I will tell later
Q. In which school did you study?
A. I do not know I will tell later
Q. What did you wear?
A. Bell bottom
Q. Those days what did you like to eat most?
A. Grapes
Q What is the name of the father of Francis Kodituwakku?
A. I do not know
Q. What did you like to drink most in your previous birth?
A. Arrack
Q How did you get money to drink arrack?
A. People gave me money
Q Who were your friends who joined you for drinking arrack?
A I do not know
Q Had you friends at the Kachcheri?
A. Yes
Q What are the names of these friends?
A. I do not know I will tell it later
Q. Who was your best friend at the Kachcheri?
A. I do not know I will tell later

Q. What was the religion of Francis Kodituwakku
A. I do not know.
Q. What is the name of the wife of Francis Kodituwakku?
A. Sumanawathi

The child was then taken to the house of Francis Kodituwakku His father Sugathapala also came with the party Since of late the boy was visiting this house almost daily Sumanawathi — the wife of Francis Kodituwakku — and three of her six children were at home Kodituwakku had six children, first three boys and the last three girls The present age of Sumanawathi is 50

The boy recognized two children Rasika and Patiya as his children in the previous life A group photograph in which Francis Kodituwakku was there was shown to the boy, but he failed to spot him out But he recognized the picture of Sumanawathi (Mrs Kodituwakku) When a photograph of the children was shown to him he failed to spot out Asoka, Rasika, Mahinda and Ananda

One Mr Dharmadasa, who lived in that house for over one year, was an intimate friend of Francis Kodituwakku But the boy failed to recognize him when his photo was shown to him

At the Kachcheri there was a group photograph taken on the retirement of the Office Assistant The boy could not recognize anyone in that photograph including Francis Kodituwakku (This group photograph at the Kachcheri of Kodituwakku and about 30 of his friends was not seen by the reborn boy before.) The child could not recognize Mr M A Gunawantha who worked with Kodituwakku at the Kachcheri for twenty years

Francis Kodituwakku had gone to Kataragama and Adam's Peak with a pilgrim party organized by the Kachcheri clerks But the boy had no memory about such a pilgrimage and anything connected with it

The boy was taken to one of Mr Kodituwakku's best friends Mr W W. Ariadasa, but he failed to recognize him

Mr T G Amadoru was a daily drinking partner of Kodituwakku at the club When the child was taken to him, he failed to recognize him

The aim of our investigation was to find out whether there was any objective evidence to establish that this so-called reborn boy had memories of his so-called previous life If as the newspapers reported this boy had memories of his previous life he should have given seventy correct answers and identifications to our investigators But the result was thoroughly disappointing Out of seventy items the boy gave only four correct answers Five more could be accepted as dubiously correct considering the inability of the boy to understand the questions put to him

Out of seventy items of questions and identifications the boy failed 61 times With such deplorable results the investigators were compelled to reject the claim made by the newspapers and the previous investigators

Like witnesses who are coached to give false evidence in court cases the boy fumbled on several occasions It was evident that the boy had been coached up to escape difficult questions by saying that he would answer them later

Hindus who believe in rebirth hold the view that all organisms have immortal souls and these souls are reborn at the death of the organisms The Matara boy was born seven months after the death of Francis Kodituwakku There is no evidence available about this boy being born premature in the seventh month

Buddhists on the other hand hold the absurd view that the last thought of the dying organism gets reborn This is an unscientific concept

A group photograph at the Matara Kachchen taken on the occasion of the retirement of the Office Assistant which contained the pictures of the late Francis Kodituwakku and his co workers was shown to the boy but he failed to identify a single person including his own previous personality in that group because this picture was shown to the boy for the first time Had he been coached up properly by interested persons the boy would have identified at least some of the persons in that photograph as he did when photographs at Francis Kodituwakku's house were shown to him This test alone is enough to dismiss this rebirth story as a hoax

Chapter—18

WAS THILAKARATNE REBORN AS GNANATILAKE?

This is one of the numerous rebirth stories of Sri Lanka declared as "Genuine' by numerous "scientific investigators' including Dr Ian Stevenson of America and 'Dr" H N Bannerji of India Mr H S D Senaratne a member of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association, has conducted an impartial investigation with a detached mind This article is based on that investigation

Rebirth investigators in Ceylon claim that they have investigated a clean rebirth case and evaluated all the data and have arrived at the conclusion that Turin Thilakaratne a boy of Talawakele was reborn as Gnanatilake, a girl, at Kotmale

As the leader of the party of investigators Mr N S S Nissanka who has written the report in Sinhalese — **Nevatha Upan Deriya** — has challenged any one to prove if possible, that the investigation is unscientific

In discussing how this boy Thilakaratne became a girl in his next life the investigators assert that there were signs that suggested that Thilakaratne was becoming a girl during his life time he liked the company of girls and used to colour his nails with water-colour

Is this not a thoroughly unscientific explanation? Sex change is not a matter of behaviour, but of hormone activity Only a thorough medical examination can decide whether one would be subjected to sex change

Secondly the investigators argue that girls grow up faster than boys between the ages of twelve and fourteen, and that Thilakaratne's body had grown at the speed of the growth of a girl Anybody who takes a little trouble can produce many boys belonging to the same age group growing faster than Thilakaratne! Do the investigators think all such boys will be reborn as girls? Even if a medical examination proved that sex change was already tak-

ing place in this boy does it mean that the process of rebirth into Gnanatilake started before the death of Thilakaratne? What an absurd surmise!

According to the investigators six year old Gnanatilake had memories of her former life But was she not confused as to who her mother was? Did it occur to her that she had two mothers one at Talawakele and the other at Kotmale?

Prof K N Jayatilleke says that he himself questioned Gnanatilake to verify the truth about her former life

Prof	Have you ever seen the sea?
Gnana	Yes
P	The sea is red, is it not?
G	No It is green and blue
P	Are there trees on the shore?
G	Yes
P	Tea and rubber grow well along the shore?
G	No, no There are only coconut trees
P	What else is there along the shore?
G	White sand.

The learned professor's inference is that, as Gnanatilake has not seen the sea in this life, her answers indicate her memory of a former life

Gnanatilake was nearly six years old at the time of questioning and we are expected to accept this type of investigation and interpretation as scientific!!

The gap of five months between the death of Thilakaratne and Gnanatilake's mother's conception is explained by Ven Piyadassi of Vajiramaya on page 167 —

> When the period of time is considered, it is obvious that there could not be an intermediate human life

Why not? A human embryo could have been aborted at five months!

He continues

> Living beings are reborn in various forms of beings other than human beings Therefore, there is no difficulty to accept that Thilakaratne must have been reborn as some other being in the intermediate period

Not necessarily! Thilakaratne might have hovered about as a "spirit" or might have been born in a number of forms of life in this intermediate period of five months — a mosquito, a bacterium, an amoeba etc! Did it not occur to these "scientific" investigators to question Gnanatilake on her memories of the various lives she led during this intermediate period? No they preferred to confine to questions and answers that would confirm them in their bias!!

On November 19 1960, the investigators went to Talawakele with Gnanatilake (P 42) She was shown the railway station the path to Thilakaratne's house, the post office, the temple the Rest House etc The investigators questioned her on November 27th to check her memories of her former life But even before this she had gone to Talawakele with her brother (P 5) She *correctly identified on the 27th what she had seen on* the 19th to the complete satisfaction of these "scientific" investigators!! How credulous and blind some believers can be!!!

On pp 22 and 42 later incidents are mentioned earlier, and earlier incidents mentioned later Does not this kind of investigation confuse the mind of the reader?

A *whole chapter is devoted to two useless journeys* undertaken in quest of the facts of Gnanatilake's early life It is only on discovering Thilakaratne an appropriate dead person who could be fitted into the frame of Gnanatilake's former life they put the question "Were you a boy or girl in your former life?

Gnanatilake was questioned at length on November 1, 1960 Here is a sample of questions and her answers

Question Where were you? (p 13)

Answer At Talawakele

There are many possible answers to this question such as — *in the house in the kitchen at the school, with* my mother, etc But Gnanatilake gave the answer that *was most needed by investigators to prove their case!*

Q Where did you go when you were there?

A. To Sripada

Here again the girl selected the appropriate answer!

Why not to the boutique, market, well or school?

Q What is there close by your house at Talawakele?
A Factory Tea factory There are many factories There are many houses as well My house is on the top of a hill

But the strong contrast to her memory, she could not recognise any of these buildings when she was taken to Talawakele!

Q Can you recognise the house?
A I do not know whether the house is there or not
Q Why do you say so?
A Because many houses are being demolished there

This is a very curious answer, and she could have given it only if she had been prepared for it, not necessarily by the investigators On page 143 it is written that according to the parents of Thilakaratne the houses at Talawakele were demolished 2½ years prior to the investigation, and they came to reside in the new house only in May 1959

It is a pity that the "scientific' investigators hadn't enough sense to find out how the girl came to know about the demolition of the houses at Talawakele which took place during her present life at Kotmale

Q What else had you there?
A I had a till I collected money in it With that money I bought a blue saree It is still in the almirah

How did this girl know that the saree was in the almirah at the time of questioning? Thilakaratne had actually bought a blue pair of trousers, not a blue saree!

Q What else had you there baby?
A Two boxes of water colours
Q What did you do with them?
A My sister and I coloured our nails

(Of course this answer paves the way to prove that the boy Thilakaratne was actually in the process of sex transformation!)

Q What else did you do?
A. Drew pictures Those drawing books must be on the almirah They must be dirty by now

Though the house was demolished and rebuilt the old 'dirty" drawing books were found exactly in the same place (top of the almirah) left by Thilakaratne!!

Q What else did you do?
A Made flowers out of paper
Q Did you go to see any one when you were at Talawakele?
A Yes
Q Whom?
A The Queen!

Surely she must have gone to see many people besides the Queen!

Recently I wrote to one of the members of the investigating party — a University Don — asking him about his candid opinion on the investigation The following extract from his reply is very illuminating —

> I do not know whether rebirth is a fact or not I know nothing obviously of the matter It is true that I went to see Gnanatilake of Kotmale I saw what took place there I am not in a position to say that it is a case of rebirth I have expressed my view in a statement given to the Silumina A short quotation from my statement has been added to the book (Nevatha Upan Deriya) It conveys just the opposite of what I meant So far I have not made the slightest effort to give publicity to this investigation
>
> I disagree fully with the investigators' conclusion though I have taken part in the investigation

The author of the book has produced a death certificate which is said to be that of Tuan Thilakaratne Though it is a copy of a death certificate, it is clear that it is not the death certificate of Tuan

The information in the reproduced death certificate is

(1) Name in full Not known G Thilakaratne of Aranayake
(2) Place of death District Hospital Aranayake.
(3) Name of parents Not known
(4) Age 16 years
(5) Place of burial Hospital Cemetery, District Hospital, Aranayake

One need not be a "scientific" investigator to know that the above death certificate is that of a destitute G Thilakaratne of unknown parentage who was given a pauper's burial at the Hospital cemetery, obviously as there were no claimants for the dead body

Turin Thilakaratne was admitted by his parents to the Rural Hospital and not the District Hospital (P 175) He belonged to Talawakele and not to Aranayake as mentioned in the certificate G Thilakaratne was 16 years, but Turin Thilakaratne was 13 years and 9 months when he died The parents of Turin were at his bedside when he died and his dead body was brought to Talawakele and buried there (P 21, 175 and 57)

The author has tabulated what Gnanatilake has said about her former life Of the 61 statements he says, 46 are true 4 half true 2 false 4 probably true 2 probably false and 2 unverifiable

His evaluation of what is true and false is typical of his interpretation of the girl s statements to prove his belief

'My mother was fair in complexion'

Interpretation Though the mother was not fair this is a probable truth because some children say so to express their affection!

"A brother of mine had a boutique at Talawakele"

Interpretation A brother did not have a boutique at Talawakele but a cousin had one at Aranayake

"I had a sister by the name of Laura/Dora."

Interpretation Thilakaratne did not have such a sister, but there was a girl named Laura close by his house.

The so-called true statements are of the following type:-

"I had a mother"

"I had a father"
"I had a sister"
"Sister beat me when I was small"
"I went to school"
"I went to Post Office.'

I am surprised that the investigators obtained only 46 such "true" statements!!

To me it is quite clear that these investigators have only done their best to bolster up a doctrine that informed and educated Buddhists are today sceptical about by methods that no trained scientific investigator would and could accept

Nowadays it is fashionable for believers to express their basis of belief in set psychological terms Prof K N Jayatilleke in his foreword to the book quotes F L Marcuse to prove that 'Hypnotism can produce the appearance of *re-incarnation*". Of course appearance is not reality, yet let us hear Marcuse

> The alleged demonstration of reincarnation by re *gression in hypnosis is a sad commentary on how* easily people may be taken in One of the best "non fiction" sellers on the American scene was a book which purported to prove reincarnation through hypnosis This book which has been described as producing a 'hypnotic explosion" and from which a film has been made may be described as a hunk *of junk What is done in practice is to bring the* person back in years until he is zero and still further back, and then—and then— a reincarnated spirit of an individual living in a previous century is said to manifest itself Instances of this are conveniently located in the far past or when in the near present have so many logical and experimental holes in them *that they are best described as not even naive!* Telling a hypnotised subject that he is someone else who lived before in a different country, in a different land and that he will be able to answer all questions will often result in his believing this and taking the proper role A mixture of specific instructions given by the hypnotist, lack of information about the *background of the hypnotized subject naivete, pep-*

pered with hypnosis, will give the appearance of reincarnation It might be mentioned that progression into the future has also been attempted with no difficulty whatsoever encountered in having the hypnotized subject describe what he will be doing in the future It seems safe and far removed from confirmation to describe events that may happen in two hundred years (or in regression two hundred years ago), but woe betide the individual who attempts to predict what will happen in a year or a week from today, for then validation of the prediction is possible To return to the present emphasis, which, is on regression rather than progression into the future, it may be noted that regression in one lifetime is difficult enough to substantiate without attempting to return to different and many lifetimes The logical culmination of this backward trend may be to reproduce monkey sounds — in which case poor biology and poor psychology would be involved
The belief that regression by hypnosis is able to accomplish many impossible things is also unfortunate (**Hypnosis—Fact and Fiction,** p 183—4)

What Marcuse has to say about the much talked of Bridey Murphy" case is equally revealing —

Regression has unfortunately lent itself to the manipulation of the quack in an ultra-sensationalistic fashion, and even more unfortunately to uncritical beliefs by physicians and dentists The case of Bridey Murphy illustrates this point carried to an extreme Bridey Murphy is the supposed previous incarnation who emerged when another person had been hypnotized and regressed a few hundred years There have been, and may continue to be a succession of Bridey Murphys' (**Hypnosis—Fact and Fiction** P. 102 See also **A Scientific Report on The Search for Bridey Murphy by M. Kline**).

Mrs Virginia Tighe under hypnotic regression said that in her previous birth she was an Irish girl by name Bridey Murphy, and gave many details of Ireland of that period The later discovery that as a child she spent some time

in the company of an old Irish woman destroyed general interest in this reincarnation story!!

We in Ceylon are fortunate that we have in our midst a master hypnotist who can prove rebirth by hypnotic regression! One Mr Amarasiri Weeratne in an article published in the Silumina, lists the following cases of reincarnations he claims to have disclosed through "hypnotic regressions"

(1) One Marcus Fernando was a soldier in King Dulugemunu's army in the 2nd century BC He was a god in another life!
(2) A student named Herbert was a pilot in Canada
(3) Jesudasan, a Tamil Catholic boy, was a merchant in Badulla
(4) Rev Sarananda Thero was an Englishman who lived in France at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century
(5) Rev Dhammavasa Thero was a god Prior to that he was a minister of King Bhatiya
(6) A daughter in law of the hypnotist was a nurse attached to the government hospital at Ratnapura
(7) Another close relative of his was working at Kahawatta Group at Ratnapura She was a male then by name Godwin Weerasinghe He married one Kamala Perera in 1848 he had two sons Upali and Nandasiri The superintendent of Kahawatta estate was an Englishman Mr Blake After retirement Godwin come to Kottegoda and lived there in a house called 'Nimalpaya" He died in 1917

It is strange that this so-called hypnotist did not care to verify the truth about any of these rebirth stories! How correct Dr Marcuse is when he says "The alleged demonstration of reincarnation by hypnotic regression is a **hunk of junk, and a revelation of charlatanism!!"**

Mr Amarasiri Weeratne's claim of hypnotic regression seems to be as fictitious as his claim to have taken part in the Gnanatileke rebirth investigation Mr Weeratne who says, "We, together with Mr Nissanka conducted

the first scientific rebirth investigation in Ceylon", is not at all listed by Mr Nissanka among those who assisted him in the investigation!

In a booklet Mr Weeratne says Prof Ian Stevenson wrote to "us" appreciating the investigation He also reproduces a quotation from this alleged letter But the naked truth is that the quotation is from a letter written by Prof Stevenson personally to Ven Piyadassi!

In that letter to Ven Piyadassi Prof Stevenson says, "I studied some 15 cases in India, but this case of Gnanatileke is one of the very best" If the dubious story of Gnanatileke's rebirth is one of the "very best" of his studies, we can just imagine how much scientific Prof Stevenson's other studies are!!

Chapter—19

THE MYSTERY OF THE HANGING KAVADI

The Sri Lanka Rationalist Asociation holds the proud record of debunking two religious cults — Walking on Fire and Hanging from Hooks — which have baffled mankind from primitive times! The credit for this exposure should go to its Vice-President Dr Carlo Fonseka — a don of the Medical Faculty of Sri Lanka

On the 10th of August 1971 Mr Indra Kumar, who was at that time a student in the Colombo Medical Faculty wrote an article in the **Daily Mirror** entitled 'Hanging on Hooks What Is the Explanation?"

In that article he asserted that "medical science" has no explanation to offer for this "fantastic feat of faith" which, according to Indra Kumar, "defies natural law" Anything which defies natural law belongs to the category of "miracles" and in describing the phenomenon of the hanging kavadi as a miracle, Mr Indra Kumar was voicing the common feeling among religious people

On what grounds do believers regard the phenomenon of the 'hanging kavadi" as a miracle? Mr Indra Kumar defined the grounds with admirable clarity 'Under normal conditions", he wrote, "these devotees are susceptible to pain bleeding neurogenic shock tetanus, gas gangrene and bacterial infection of wounds" However, when a devotee undertakes the ritual of the hanging kavadi he "never bleeds, has no pain, does not develop neurogenic shock, tetanus, gas gangrene or bacterial infection" Nor do the hooks from which he is suspended ever tear through the tissues under the strain of his weight Thus, according to Mr Indra Kumar, there are no less than seven inexplicable "mysteries" concerning the phenomenon of the hanging kavadi

Let us look at each of these "mysteries" in turn

Lack of Pain

How is the devotee able to tolerate the piercing of his flesh with hooks? It is now known to physiologists that pain has two components, the sensation itself and the emotional reaction to the sensation The reaction to pain is largely determined by the significance to the individual of the cause of the pain And it is the reaction to pain and not the sensation itself, which determines the presence or absence of suffering The devotee who is having hooks being driven through his flesh has voluntarily submitted himself to the procedure The cause of the pain, therefore has no ominous significance to him Accordingly, he does not react apprehensively to this pain Hence he does not suffer from whatever pain he may experience

Again, as every well-informed medical man knows some wounds can be quite painless Thus the majority of soldiers freshly and grievously wounded in warfare interrogated by Beecher did not complain of any great pain This was because of the special significance of the wounds to them, for they meant, at least temporarily, the end of the war for these wounded soldiers So painless wounds are not unknown to medical science, though perhaps not to all medical students

Nor is that all Strong emotion, be it of religious non religious or even irreligious origin can block the perception of pain A devotee submitting himself to the ritual of the hanging kavadi does not feel pain under the impact of the religious emotions aroused in him

Recently a rationalist minded young volunteer named N C Jayasuriya, who openly spurned divine aid, went through the procedure of the hanging kavadi on three separate occasions without showing any obvious sign of pain.

Lack of Bleeding

Devotees believe that the absence of bleeding from the dozen or so wounds sustained by the devotee during the hooking up process is a sign of supernatural aid However, at least three natural factors combine to reduce bleeding to an absolute minimum during the flesh piercing procedure One is the increased secretion of a hormone

called adrenaline by the adrenal medulla gland Adrenaline causes constriction of blood vessels in the skin and superficial tissues—the very tissues through which the hooks are inserted The second factor is the activation of a mechanism termed the "extrinsic mechanism' which greatly speeds up the process of blood clotting This speeding up is due to the liberation of a chemical factor *from the tissues damaged by the penetrating hooks* This tissue factor causes blood to clot in a matter of seconds and blood clotting is one device the body has for arresting bleeding from damaged tissues

The third, and possibly the most important factor, which helps to reduce the amount of bleeding almost to nothing is the tension exerted by the hooks on the damaged tissues A hook is inserted only after the skin and the underlying tissues at a given site in the body are "pinched up", and "pinching up" the tissues has the same effect on the blood vessels of the region as the application of external pressure to the region it causes obliteration of the blood vessels Moreover, once a hook has been inserted, tension is applied on the hook by means of a string so that external pressure on the blood vessels of the region continues to be applied These three factors in combination can well prevent bleeding from the wounds *sustained by a person undertaking the hanging kavadi* even without any divine aid Mr Jayasuriya who did not invoke any divine aid, **did not bleed from the wounds he sustained during the hooking up demonstrations he gave.**

Absence of Neurogenic Shock

In plain English developing neurogenic shock means fainting As is well known, people usually faint either when they are in severe pain or when they are emotionally upset, e g *by bad news or by the sight of blood* Why does not a devotee who is being hooked up faint? Because he does not experience severe pain, nor is he emotionally upset during the ritual Mr Jayasuriya did not faint either—for precisely the same reasons

Absence of Tetanus, Gas Gangrene and Bacterial Infection of Wounds.

These "mysteries" can conveniently be considered together because they all have to do with bacterial infec-

tion of one sort or another It is claimed by believers that devotees who subject themselves to the self mortification of flesh-piercing never develop tetanus gas gangrene or infection of their wounds despite the fact that they take no medical precautions of any kind This immunity from bacterial assault, devotees contend is also a special sign of divine favour Concerning this claim the first thing that requires to be said is that those who make it are almost invariably those who have never followed up these devotees beyond the ritual For my part, although I have never encountered a devotee who had got tetanus or gas gangrene as a result of undertaking the hanging kavadi, I have encountered several whose wounds had festered Sometimes in the same devotee, some wounds fester whilst others heal uneventfully Does this mean that divine aid was brought to bear on some wounds of the devotee and not on others? A more rational explanation than that surely must be sought, and such an explanation must suggest itself to anyone equipped with even an elementary knowledge of surgery

Of the vast number of bacteria in our environment only a few are injurious to man When bacteria enter a wound the outcome depends on the interaction of three factors the nature and virulence of the bacteria, the number of bacteria that entered the wound and the general health and resistance to disease of the injured person When bacteria enter a wound in a strong, healthy man festering will occur only if a large number of a virulent strain of bacteria have entered the wound It is a fact that bacteria become established only with difficulty in healthy tissues with a good blood supply After all, it is a common observation that, of all the wounds that little children sustain in the ordinary round of daily life, only a few fester

As to tetanus and gas gangrene, these deadly diseases are caused by a variety of bacteria called Clostridia which are usually found in faeces and well manured soil Devotees who undertake the ritual of hanging from hooks are strong, are healthy adults and the wounds they sustain are not likely to become heavily contaminated with either faeces or well manured soil That is why they are not

likely to develop either tetanus or gas gangrene as a result of the wounds they receive After all, of all those who sustain wounds in every-day life, those who develop tetanus and gas gangrene are a microscopic minority The reason why such a fuss is made by doctors about tetanus and gas gangrene is that when they do occur, they are always serious and often fatal This does not mean however, that they are common diseases The infrequency or even the absence of tetanus and gas gangrene, among devotees who have submitted themselves to the hanging kavadi is, therefore, not a special sign of divine favour Rather, it is simply an exemplification of the well known medical aphorism that "rare diseases are rare" The fact is that tetanus and gas gangrene are rare not only among theists who sustain wounds in the fulfilment of vows to their assorted gods, but even among atheists who accidentally sustain wounds and do precious little about them

Lack of Tearing of Flesh

This is perhaps the most incredible feature in the "hooking business" to the ordinary observer Why, he wonders in utter disbelief and amazement, don't the hooks tear through the tissues of the devotee's back, under the strain of his weight? The answer to this mystery is the answer to a problem in elementary physics Suppose you hang a weight of 10 lb from a spring balance, the balance will, needless to say, read 10 lb Suppose you now suspend the same 10 lb-weight from two spring balances instead of one, each balance will now read 5 lb In like manner, if you suspend the 10 lb weight from four spring balances, each balance will register a reading of only 2½ lb No doubt the general idea which the above example illustrates is now clear in the reader's mind It is not for nothing that the devotee hangs himself from at least 6 hooks Not even the most devout devotee who fancies himself as "becoming one with the deity" during the ritual, has dared to hang himself on just one hook The skin and underlying tissues of a 120 lb man will not snap under a strain of a weight of $120 \div 6 = 20$ lb But they will certainly snap under a strain of $120 \div 1 = 120$ lb

So much for the "seven mysteries" connected with the "hooking business" When Mr Indra Kumar went so far as to assert presumptuously that this "fantastic feat of faith" baffles "medical science" he was either indulging in gross hyperbole (pardonable in a medical student) or speaking out of sheer ignorance (unpardonable in a medical student of even average intelligence).

Chapter—20

THE KUDAGAMA HOAX

At Kudagama in Sri Lanka there is a Roman Catholic church which is fast becoming a place for "miraculous cures" brought about by a thorn said to be from the "Crown of Thorns" put on the head of Jesus Christ during his crucifixion.

Several readers have written to me calling my attention to two articles in the Tamil newspaper **Mithran** of April 12, 1976, by Messrs. A. Thampiyappan and J. Fernando about Kudagama miracles. These two articles are clear proofs that literate gullibles are more dangerous to society than illiterate ones. The illiterate gullibles will not be able to spread their foolish and superstitious beliefs among the masses as literate ones can do. Because of their ability to write in books and newspapers, the literate gullibles are in a better position to spread their foolish notions than the illiterate ones.

These two gentlemen exhibit their appalling ignorance of human psychology when they describe what they have seen at Kudagama as "miracles". They have found miraculous powers in Fr. Jayamanne, his blessings, his poojas, his prayers, and the so-called sacred thorn in his possession. Had they seen the voodoo rituals of the witch-doctors of dark Africa and the Pacific Islands among the aborigines they would have seen nothing miraculous at Kudagama!

Instead of blindly believing that the sacred thorn has miraculous powers, let them test it by taking a person with an amputated limb to Kudagama and see for themselves whether the sacred thorn or Fr. Jayamanne's prayers and poojas can make the amputated limb grow and become whole. Then only they will realize the hoax about Kudagama. Neither the God of Kudagama nor his mother the Virgin Mary will be able to make that amputated limb grow even one inch.

I have written on an earlier occasion how the tap water from the Kottarakkara railway station, which I distributed as 'holy water' from the "sacred river" Ganges effected many miraculous cures among the credulous Hindus living in the neighbourhood of my ancestral home in Kerala! If the so-called sacred thorn from the "Crown of Thorns" at the Kudagama church is replaced by a wild thorn from the jungles of Kudagama without the knowledge of the gullible pilgrims, Messrs Thampiyappan and Fernando will be able to see for themselves that the jungle thorn also will have the same effect on the gullible pilgrims as the so-called sacred thorn itself Just like the holy ash produced by burning dry cow dung effects miraculous cures among some credulous fools in India and Sri Lanka, the excreta of the Dalai Lama is claimed to have effected miraculous cures among the credulous Buddhists of Tibet Dried tablets were made from the excreta of Dalai Lama the living incarnation of the Buddha, and sold at fabulous prices as a panacea for all types of diseases to the gullibles of Tibet It appears the excreta of Dalai Lama has lost all its miraculous powers since his exile in India In India there is no market for his excreta For the Hindus of India cow's excreta is more sacred than that of Dalai Lama

Over half a century ago, the Brahmin priest of a Kali temple at Chengannoor in Kerala found that the income from his temple was not enough to maintain his big family He thought out a plan to increase the daily offerings in the temple He spread a story among the few devotees who visited to worship goddess Kali that the statue of Kali had started menstruating regularly each month

By selling small bits of dried sanitary napkins of his wife and grown up daughters at fabulous prices to credulous Hindus far and near the Brahmin as well as the temple became very rich The curative power of the blood stained pieces of the so called sanitary napkins of goddess Kali persisted for several years among the gullibles of Kerala!

Be it a jungle thorn, sacred cross, sacred tooth tap water, holy ash, Lama's excreta, sacred cow, sacred phal

lus, pirith nool, talisman, poojas, pilgrimages, sacrifices or prayers, the effect is the same on blind believers

It is claimed that Fr Jayamanne is able to drive out spirits from possessed persons by his Christian witchcraft The difference between Fr Jayamanne and the village kattadiya is that they are in different costumes One is in a cassock, and the other in a sarong. The techniques used by the kattadiyas, witch doctors of the aborigines, priests of the Christians swamis of the Hindus thangals of the Muslims and monks and kapuralas of the Buddhists are nothing but witchcrafts in different forms

Let us see whether there is any objective truth in spirit possession and exorcism Currently a series of articles are being published in the **Sunday Observer** about the exploits of some Christian kattadiyas in driving away imaginary spirits from psychopaths suffering from glossolalia and creptesthesia These psychopaths, who were brainwashed from childhood about the existence of spirits, are subject to hallucination of being possessed by imaginary spirits or demons Some of these psychopaths who are brainwashed by Pentecostal missionaries have hallucinations of being possessed by the holy spirit, and begin to speak in "different" tongues

The religion of the primitive man, when he was a savage, was animism The animist believed that all things, whether living or non living had souls or spirits Thus he worshipped even inanimate things like mountains, rivers oceans, sun, moon, idols, etc Even though some backward people still worship such inanimate objects, others during their progress from the savage state made numerous religions and numerous gods Most of these religions and gods have now become extinct I have seen numerous extinct gods of Egypt Rome Greece China, Assyria, Mexico, Persia, Mesopotamia Chaldea etc, in the museums of Paris, London Rome Alexandria, Cairo and many other Western cities Like the extinct gods of the past, the extant gods of today too are sure to end up in the museums of future man

Most of the post animistic religions gave up the idea that non living things had spirits Hinduism, which is the oldest of the surviving religions, teaches that all living

things have immortal souls Judaism Christianity and Islam which originated in the Middle East, teach that man alone has an immortal soul and not any other living being. But more than 2500 years ago Lord Buddha a great social and religious reformer of India who rebelled against the Hindu religion taught that not even man has an immortal soul This concept is in complete accord with modern science It is rather strange that some persons who claim to be Buddhists still cling on to the Hindu belief of reincarnation just because the doctrine of rebirth has crept into some so-called Buddhist scriptures written hundreds of years after the death of Lord Buddha, by some Indians who claimed to be the disciples of Buddha Though Lord Buddha was an out and out atheist who did not believe in creation and a creator, those so called disciples have written about the existence of gods demons, "gods' world" and "demons' world Could it be the fifth columnist activities of these so-called disciples of Buddha who were responsible for the extinction of Buddhism in the land of its birth?

Let us now see whether there is anything in an organism that can survive its death to become a spirit To understand this, it is necessary to have a sound scientific knowledge about the nature of life and its origin

Most of us are indoctrinated from childhood with the cock-and-bull stories of creation given by scriptures of various religions According to the three Middle East religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam god created the sun, stars and the moon after he created the earth and the vegetation on it This is an absurd concept according to astronomy and botany God is said to have forgotten to create a woman when he created the first man Adam The first woman—Eve—was created as a result of a second thought by god after Adam had complained about not having a wife The scripture of another religion says that the earth is supported by a giant tortoise supported by a giant snake The writer of this scripture had not enough commonsense to provide a support for the snake! According to another scripture, the support at the base is a tortoise

Concept of Life

The writers of religious scriptures had no knowledge about the real nature of the universe They all thought that the earth was flat, and the centre of the universe. The first man who said that the earth was round—Giordano Bruno—was burnt to death by the Roman Catholic Church Galileo was sent to prison by the Catholic Church for his "crime" of opposing the Biblical concept that the earth was stationary, and that the sun was going round it All our present knowledge about the universe came from the scientific researches of astronomers and not from scriptures of religions

Astronomers estimate that the earth, like other solar planets, was formed over four billion years ago by the agglomeration of particles of matter in space Later when the temperature and atmospheric conditions of the earth were suitable, life originated on it as a result of chemical activity Molecules of livable organic matter were formed from methane, ammonia and water of the primitive atmosphere of the earth under the influence of solar and volcanic energies (Simulating the conditions of the primitive atmosphere of the earth the Nobel Laureate Dr Har Gobind Khorana and Dr Cyril Ponnamperuma have succeeded in producing molecules of livable organic matter in their laboratories) These molecules in due course developed the property of replicating and producing energy through slow oxidation called respiration It is this type of energy produced by respiring organic matter that we call life Livable matter becomes a living body when it respires and produces vital energy (life)

The molecules of organic matter formed on the primitive earth produced unicellular organisms in due course which as a result of millions of years of evolution gave rise to the present flora and fauna

Harlow Shapply, the famous astro-physicist, says that there can be millions of planets in space where life is possible It may be that in some of these planets there are organisms much more intelligent and much more evolved than man This he says, because there can be other planets in space where conditions for the genesis and evolution of life are possible. Some astro-

are of the v ew that molecules of livable organic matter reached the earth through meteorites and comets

Since conditions on the moon were not favourable for sustaining life, astronauts who went to the moon had to take with them all three substances necessary for the production of life These three substances are (1) the livable matter (proteinic protoplasm), (2) nutrition in the form of food and water, and (3) oxygen Of these three the first they took in their bodies, and the other two in containers If they had run short of any of these life-generating substances, they would not have returned to earth alive

Life is nothing but a form of energy produced by the slow oxidation (resp ration) of the nutrient substances such as glucose, fats and protein found in the cells of organisms It is the product of a chemical reaction taking place in the cells This life-producing respiration is not in any way different from the burning of a fuel like a candle The difference between the two lies only in the speed of the chemical reaction If the oxidation taking place in the body of an organism is fast like a burning fuel, the high temperature produced will destroy the livable matter

As long as the substance of the candle does not undergo chemical decomposition, it can be lit and put out several times Similarly, if the protoplasm in the body of an organism does not undergo decomposition the dead body can be revived several times by artificial means In 1963, the American film star Peter Sellers died seven times, and each time he was revived by the use of an electronic pace-maker After the seventh resurrection Peter Sellers has acted in many more films, and has become the father of two more children When a put out candle is relit, we do not say that the flame "departed" and came back to the candle when it was lit again Similarly, it is absurd to say that Peter Sellers' life departed from his body each time he died, and came back to it when resuscitated

On April 24, 1978, a senior student of Wesley College —Arodi C Paul—was taken to the General Hospital, Colombo, in an unconscious state after a fall in the bath-

room The neurosurgeon diagnosed the case as haemorrhage of the brain During an angiogram Arodi died as his brain died and ceased to send electrical impulses to the heart and the diaphragm The doctors revived his body using a respirator and giving a heart massage Though in a state of coma Arodi continued to live for two more days with the use of the respirator and saline drip

Did the so-called "departed soul" of Arodi return to his body when the doctor started using the respirator? Was Arodi reborn twice first when he died on 24th morning and later when he died on 26th evening? As in all cases of resuscitation it was not a case of Arodi's life returning to his dead body when it was revived but only a case of the dead body producing fresh life (vital energy) through respiration He revived because the respirator was connected to the dead body before decomposition!

Mind

Apart from body and life some organisms have a third entity known as mind The fact that life and mind are different entities, and that both are produced by different types of chemical reactions taking place in different types of cells of the body, is not known to persons like Thampiyappan and Fernando While life is common to all organisms, mind is present only in those organisms that possess specialized cells called neurons which constitute the brain of higher animals While the quality of life is the same in all organisms whether it is a tree or a man the quality of mind differs according to the evolutional development of the nervous system A potato an egg a tree or a bacterium has life, but no mind A rat, a cat or a man has both life and mind

Death is the cessation of production of vital energy by respiration Just as there cannot be a flame without a fuel to burn there cannot be life without a body to respire To speak about life surviving the death of the body is as fictitious as speaking about a disembodied spirit appearing with body and dress before deluded persons. It is ridiculous to say that a part of the life of a person is in a clock that works after he has wound it If that

person dies of heart failure after winding the clock no sensible person will say that the dead man's life persists and works in the clock. Life can never exist outside the body of an organism

Now let us turn our attention to the question of mind Most religionists equate mind with life That is why they talk about the sanctity of human life While life is the product of respiration in organic cells mind is the result of the physico-chemical activities that take place in the neurons As we go down the evolutionary ladder of organisms the quality of mind also goes down This is not so in the case of life The quality of life in a man, a monkey or a mango tree is the same Even a unicellular organism whether it is a plant or animal has certain rudimentary mental faculties although it has no neurons or nervous system They respond in various degrees to environmental stimuli The mental faculties of vertebrates which have brains composed of billions of neurons are much superior to those of invertebrates Human beings have the most highly evolved brain among organisms on the planet earth Hence unlike other organisms on earth man is capable of engaging in creative thinking reasoning and communicating with fellow beings with speech and writing. All these mental activities are the result of physico-chemical activities going on in the neurons Nobel Laureate Walter Hess and Professor Delgado have succeeded in arousing mental emotions like love, hatred anger compassion, cruelty kindness etc by stimulating the respective centres of the brain with electrical impulses Since mind is the product of electro-chemical processes that go on in the neurons of the brain it is absurd to believe that the mind can survive the death and decay of the brain or even to talk about extracerebral mind

Thus neither life nor mind can survive the death of the body Can there be ghosts or spirits without body life and mind? Offering food for the body less spirits of dead ancestors is as absurd as making offerings to lifeless idols Do those who talk about spirits marching on their roofs, knocking at their doors throwing stones, moving things about or even appearing before them in the

dark, realize that such things are impossible to happen without a physical body?

What is this fictitious thing called soul, which all religions except Buddhism believe in? Nobody seems to have any definite conception about it. Some people equate soul with life. Others think it is the mind, and that the heart is the seat of it. It is from such foolish belief that sayings like hard heartedness, soft heartedness, kind heartedness, learning by heart, sacred heart, etc, came into vogue.

If the soul is in the heart, as the Sacred Heart faddists believe, we will have to face the funny situation of people exchanging their souls by transplantation of their hearts! If the soul is the head, as some others say, the headless bodies of insects which can continue to live even after decapitation, will be living without souls. If, on the other hand, the soul is diffused in the whole body of an organism, the spiritualists will have a lot of problematic questions to answer.

1. Bodies of lower animals, which can take in oxygen through the skin or through pores all along the body, can be fragmented into small pieces, and each piece is capable of growing into a new organism In such cases will the offspring organisms possess only fragments of the soul of the parent organism?

2. Though man, like all other mammals, is an individual and cannot be fragmented to produce new human beings because his respiratory system is centralized, he too has a dividual state during the early days of his development in his mother's womb before the development of his centralized biological organs Sometimes the human foetus in the womb may divide and separate into two, three or more, and develop into identical twins, triplets, quadruplets etc. In such a case, will the quadruplet boys or girls have in each of them only a quarter of the original soul of the undivided foetus?

3. If the soul "departs" from the body at the time of death, and if the dead body is revived artificially even after several years, as it can be done in cryogeny, does the "departed" soul re-enter the resuscitated body? If so, where will this soul be during the intervening period?

4 If a person has several grafted organs and tissues in his body, will that person be possessing fragments of several souls?

The unwarranted assumption that organisms have souls and that they are transported to their offspring along with their sperms and ova has not been proven nor is it capable of proof since a "soul" has never been observed or verified So also is the absurd theory of some Buddhists that the last thought of a dying organism has the power to penetrate the womb of a pregnant organism and enter the oospore or foetus in it! These rebirth faddists seem to be ignorant about reproduct on by other than the sexual method!

If there are no spirits and demons, then how is it that some persons speak and act like those possessed by spirits and demons? As I said earlier, all those who see apparitions of spirits, or get possessed by them are mentally deranged persons who are brainwashed with the superstitious belief in the existence of spirits and demons I have cured hundreds of so-called possessed persons not by exorcising the non-existing spirits and demons from them, but by removing from their mind their delusions through hypnosis

themselves deluded persons. Even Jesus Christ held such a foolish belief. He is reported to have cured the sick by exorcising "evil spirits" from them! But when these exorcists talk about their ability to spot out places where charms are hidden, I have to say categorically that they are *not deluded persons. They are utter frauds.*

The **Ceylon Sunday Observer** is now specialising in ghost stories, and patronising the kattadiyas of Sri Lanka. In one of the articles in that paper it is said that Fr. Mathew Peiris has the divine gift for locating charms. If Fr. Mathew claims that he has this clairvoyant power, I have to challenge him to prove it under fraud-proof *conditions. I invite him to take up my permanent chal*lenge to read through his clairvoyant gift the serial number of a currency note in a sealed envelope, and win the one lakh of rupees I have staked Nobody has, and nobody ever had, clairvoyant or miraculous powers If Fr. Mathew Peiris is capable of spotting out hidden charms, then he is also capable of introducing them by stealth, like all other kattadiyas.

Some writers in the **Sunday Observer** have written about the miraculous powers of the holy cross of the Christian exorcists in driving out spirits, and that they get heated up when placed on the foreheads of victims of possession. That the holy cross and the thorn at the Kudagama church are no more sacred than the cow dung of the Hindus, and the Dalai Lama's excreta, can be demonstrated by simple tests

Just as the excreta of a human being is sacred to the Buddhists of Tibet because it happens to be that of Dalai Lama, a living incarnation of the Buddha, the cross is holy to the Christians because Jesus Christ, their God, was crucified on it. Instead of being crucified, had he been shot, Christian priests and nuns would have had on their persons holy guns instead of holy crosses, making a big security risk to the society. Then the Christian kattadiyas would have made use of the holy guns not only for their exorcising witchcrafts, but also for other purposes

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During the last World War, I had the rare opportunity of treating a woman of Akmeemana who got possessed by the spirit of her living husband who was a soldier on active service, when she got a false telegram about his death Having been brought up in a society which believed in spirits and tormented by the guilty feeling of having given birth to a so-called illegitimate child during her husband's absence, she developed the hallucination of being possessed by her husband's spirit on receipt of the wrong telegram although he was still alive! Since all cases of possession are nothing but hallucinations of feeble and deranged minds, the witchcraft techniques of Christian Hindu Buddhist and Muslim kattadiyas (exorcists) can have hypnotic influence on their suggestible minds to sedate their hysteria But we should not forget the fact that those who attempt to exorcise non existing spirits from glossolaliacs through their mumbo jumbo rituals, holy cross, sacred thorn, holy water, prayers, etc, are

themselves deluded persons Even Jesus Christ held such a foolish belief He is reported to have cured the sick by exorcising 'evil spirits from them' But when these exorcists talk about their ability to spot out places where charms are hidden I have to say categorically that they are not deluded persons They are utter frauds

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from the Crown of Thorns at the Kudagama Church The very fact that several persons who were taken to Kudagama were brought to me for hypnotherapy, shows that the so-called miraculous effect of the thorn is not so miraculous as scientific hypnotherapy I can prove that the story about the advent of this thorn to Sri Lanka is a big hoax like Dr Bhagavantham's story of Sai Baba materialising a Seiko watch and giving it to Mr Shoji Hattori of Japan, if Thampiyappan and Fernando can get the answers to the following questions from F Jayamanne or Fr Iannakone

1 The exact date when Fr Jannakone arrived in the Island with the sacred thorn
2 Was it declared to the Customs at the airport or at the harbour?
3 Was its arrival reported then even in Catholic newspapers?
4 Was it exhibited to the Catholics or taken in procession any time?
5 The date on which Fr Jayamanne came in possession of it
6 Name and address of the person from whom Fr Jannakone got this thorn
7 Where is the original Crown of Thorns from which this thorn was taken?

Although only three nails were used to crucify Jesus Christ today there are hundreds of nails of crucifixion in Roman Catholic churches all over Europe Similarly, although Jesus had only one foreskin like all other human beings there are several foreskins of Christ as sacred relics in Catholic churches, and all of them are said to possess miraculous curative properties No doubt, the demand creates the supply

For over half a century I have investigated hundreds of poltergeistism in so-called haunted houses, and in all those cases I have succeeded in tracing the poltergeist as a human being who is either a mentally deranged person or a mischief maker

Spirits had nothing to do with any of those poltergeistic phenomena I have investigated and solved

Chapter—21

A RELIGIO-MANIAC'S THREAT

On 25th January 1969, the following challenge from an anonymous religious fanatic appeared in **The Times Weekender** :—

To Face the Unknown Terrors of an Unseen World?

Abraham T Kovoor, rationalist, has from time to time over the years laughed to scorn all tales of ghosts, miracles, divine intervention etc

He has challenged, openly, publicly, all who would uphold the cla m that there are stranger things on this earth than Man is aware of, and has upheld the rationalist view that everything has an explanation and everything is material, matter of fact and ordinary

Now, a challenger has come forward to show Mr Kovoor how wrong or right he is These are the conditions of the challenge

1 A CONFRONTATION Mr Kovoor and his rationalists must be prepared to meet the challenger, face to face

2. ANY member among Mr Kovoor's rationalists may be appointed as official representative or spokesman of the Rationalist Association in the event of Mr Kovoor himself being unwilling to face his challenger

3 The official contender of the Rationalist Associat on must carry written evidence to show that he comes forward for and on behalf of Mr Kovoor and that he will not hold the challenger responsible for anything that might cause in him fear, terror, amazement or even physical distress, when such emotions and physical distress come from a source that the challenger is in no way responsible for Should Mr Kovoor come forward, he would be required to give

this same undertaking so that the challenger is completely indemnified from the powers of the spiritual forces that may or may not be unleashed at this confrontation

4 Mr Kovoor must furnish the challenger with a complete list of the names of rationalists who would attend such a 'show down"

5 Mr Kovoor may name any spot he may desire for such a meeting but the challenger wishes that it be in a public place of worship open to all who would wish to be spectators Mr Kovoor is free to select any church temple kovil or mosque for this meeting

6 The challenger is to remain anonymous until the time of the meeting Should Mr Kovoor accept this challenge through the medium of this paper the challenger would then contact him by 'other means"

7 The challenger states that this challenge issued through the medium of THE TIMES does not in any way implicate the newspaper or make it responsible for such a confrontation or anything that might ensue from such a meeting He wishes Mr Kovoor to tender to the newspaper namely THE TIMES similar undertaking

My reply to this challenge was published in the same paper on 1st February 1969 in an edited article thus --

KOVOOR PICKS UP THE ANONYMOUS GAUNTLET

7 points before I make a fool of this CHALLENGER

Mr Abraham T Kovoor writes

I was thrilled to read in **The Times Weekender** (January 25th) the challenge issued by an anonymous person to me and my fellow rationalists because I knew that this would give me an opportunity to prove before the public the absurdity of man s irrational beliefs in the existence of spiritual and supernatural powers and beings I wish to thank and congratulate **The Times Weekender** for publishing this challenge which I am sure will eventually result

in eradicating some of the superstitious beliefs and practices of mankind

As I am accepting this challenge, I am giving below my answers and comments on the seven points mentioned in that challenge

1 Myself and my fellow rationalists are prepared to meet the challenger "face to face" on February 24th, 1969 at 5 p m at Thurstan College Hall

2 I myself with a few fellow rationalists will be facing the challenge if and when it is conducted

3 We are prepared to sign a document indemnifying the challenger for any adverse effects we may suffer from the so called **supernatural** powers of spirits, devils, demons, ghosts, satans, angels, gods saints, priests, holy men, divine beings, gobbins gins curses, vas kavi, kattadiyas, kappuralas, manthra karayas, hoonyamkarayas etc but not from natural crimes or illegal acts such as fraud, deception poisoning, stabbing, shooting, electric shock, radiation etc

To prevent fraud and deception we insist on the "showdown" being conducted during day-time and in a public place We rationalists know by experience that sunlight, criminal laws and the presence of fellow human beings have better effect on man to make him refrain from doing illegal acts, than the presence of an omnipresent and omnipotent god

We must be given full freedom to search the challenger for hidden gimmicks

4 The names of persons who will be accompanying me to face the 'showdown' will be given to the challenger if and when he comes to Thurstan College of February 24th, 1969

5 As I feel there will be a large number of spectators to see this "farce", I suggest an arena such as the Sugathadasa Stadium or the Oval as the venue From the time this challenge appeared in **The Times Weekender** I have been receiving hundreds of telephone calls requesting me to give them an opportunity to witness the "stunt" in case I am accepting the challenge In fact, I was woken up from my

sleep on the morning of January 25th, by a phone call from a friend asking me whether I had read the challenge to me in that morning's **Weekender.** This shows how interested people are to witness this and the need for a large area to accommodate the crowd

Since there is no bet involved in this, the challenger will have to meet the expenses connected with it

6 This challenger's desire to remain anonymous makes me suspect his genuineness I say this from my past experience with similar challengers In 1967 a kattadiya from Panadura claimed that he could by his powerful charms and the demons under his control, perform various miracles such as putting a ghost in my palm, showing a "Mahasona" in a mirror, producing a ghost before me to be photographed, getting me stuck to the chair I was seated in and smashing up all the pieces of furniture in my bungalow Though several dates were fixed for him to perform these miracles, he never turned up

In 1966, a Buddhist Monk, whose speciality is writing "vasa kavi" and preparing talismans, told me in the presence of a large crowd, that he could read the serial number on a ten rupee currency note sealed up in an envelope Even after repeated requests by letter, he never appeared again

There were numerous similar threats of accepting my various challenges from astrologers, palmists and manthrakkarayas But none of them ever came forward As a result of three challenges issued by me on three occasions to all occultist and spiritualists in this country to kill me during specified time limits, by their charms vasa kavi, necromancy, hoonyam etc, I received 48 charms by post from various parts of the Island Of these 33 were on copper and silver foils, and the rest on paper In spite of all these powerful charms sent to kill me, I am still alive—hale and hearty Of course like all mortals when I die these occultists might claim that my death was due to the delayed action of their charms

Is the present challenger's desire to remain anonymous a special device to conveniently back out in the end without any loss of personal prestige?

Since there is no bet attached to this challenge I insist that the identity of the challenger must be revealed to the public before we face the so-called "showdown" He must either lose some money or become a fool before the public

Since the challenger has not divulged the nature of the "showdown", I reserve to myself the right to stipulate further conditions depending on its nature

While thanking **The Times Weekender** for publicity, I assure the newspaper that neither I nor the Ceylon Rationalist Association will hold **The Times** responsible for anything connected with this confrontation

The following article published in The Times Weekender of 9th February, 1969, contained the anonymous challenger's rejoinder

"Terms of the confrontation 'twixt theist and rationalist still not settled:

"YOU ARE THE CHALLENGER, MR. KOVOOR"

The anonymous challenger, who has expressed great pleasure at Mr Abraham Kovoor's spirited reply, has sent us the following letter He states

I wish to make one point very clear It is something that was not mentioned earlier I am not Mr Kovoor's challenger The reading public of this country will remember that Mr Kovoor has issued through the medium of the Press, a Challenge to any person to prove that there is a spiritual plane that affects us If I remember right, Mr Kovoor offered a cash 'bet" of Rs 1 000 in this regard

Hence I am now, although belatedly, accepting his challenge I feel that as an acceptor, Mr Kovoor is in no position to state terms He has ridiculed and scorned and shown a heavy intolerance for the beliefs of many

I come forward in all humility to offer to show Mr Kovoor that he is wrong There is no need for bets or wagers or the tactics of a boxing ring

My original terms stand Mr Kovoor may select any religious place of worship where the public may also be free to witness our meeting.

He may search me but should he insist I would also claim the same privilege Indeed it may be better that we both strip to loincloths!

I have little else to say in this matter Mr Kovoor like a doubting Thomas or an unbelieving Paul must come to realise some day that there is a greater power of God that can change his life I am aware that he will come to scoff I firmly believe that he will remain to pray

There is nothing evil in my designs Instead I feel a warm sense of satisfaction that soon I would meet a gentleman who has been firm enough to scoff because God did not show him by divine sign the fact of His presence But I believe in the existence of this Super Goodness and know that Mr Kovoor must ultimately also believe For even in Mr Kovoor are the seeds of the divinity for we can all reach up to the stars

I trust that you will give me your venue according to my terms Mr Kovoor You have no fear of the Unknown so why fear a religious place of worship? You may bring a police escort but I assure you you will have no reason to fear for I love you as a child of God It is in us that we love each other and draw closer to each other in the true awareness of the divine light that will soon infuse us

I would be most happy to have your firm word by next Poya morning If you do not wish to accept me on my terms you fail—and I will pray for you

On the same day the following letter from a reader also was published in the same paper —

"Disclose Your Identity

Mr Ariya Pathirana of Kurunegala has sent us the following letter in connexion with the Kovoor confrontation

Mr Abraham Kovoor (vide The "Times Weekender", February, 1st) states that he was thrilled to

read the challenge issued by an anonymous person who has challenged in general the rationalist viewpoint

I have before me **The Times Weekender** of February 1st With reference to the conditions that this great man or woman has laid down, I would unhesitatingly answer them as briefly as possible

Condition No. 1: Both Mr. Kovoor and I are prepared to meet this challenger face to face, my condition being that through the medium of your valuable journal he should disclose his complete identity On our part, we will not frighten him or send him any threats

In view of my reply to condition No 1, a reply to **condition No. 2** does not arise

In regard to **Condition No. 3,** our reply is that we will indemnify everyone including **The Times.** Our condition with regard to this is that the challenger should first allow himself at the spot, at the hour, and date specified, to be examined by a medical man who knows forensic science, and a representative of the Inspector General of Police

To Condition No. 4, our answer is that we are agreeable to satisfy this challenger and everything will be done in deference to his wishes But there is no need to go to a place of worship, be it Buddhist, Christian or Hindu If the supernatural powers of spirits demons, devils ghosts, saints, and kapuralas are to be accepted, then it must be equally feasible for them to perform these powers in the open and in daylight

In regard to **Condition No. 5,** the rationalist will have no objection to anyone being present at the show, indeed, we shall invite believers as well as nonbelievers in religion as well as rationalism

As regards **Condition No 6,** it seems to me as it should to anyone else, with commonsense, to be the height of absurdity and cowardice for this challenger to remain anonymous He should have had the courage both of his convictions and powers to Come out openly

As mentioned by Mr Kovoor, there are several—nay, thousands in my opinion—who wish to witness this performance

I request that this return challenge be accepted by the end of February"

My rejoinder to the anonymous challenger's reply appeared in the **Times Weekender** on 16th February It was as follows —

The Kovoor Confrontation

'These are my Challenges and which do you Accept?'

Mr Abraham T Kovoor writes

The reluctance of the anonymous challenger to disclose his identity even after my acceptance of his challenge confirms my suspicion that he is planning ahead to back out anonymously in the end without any loss of personal prestige

From what he has written on 9-2-1969, (in **The Times Weekender**) it appears that he is not a charlatan like astrologers palmists, priests kattadiyas, kappuralas, manthrakkarayas hoonyamkarayas, exorcists, vas and seth-kavi writers spirit media and other types of specialists in witchcrafts, nor like the precognitive prophet Jeane Dixon who has a special knack for giving publicity to her so-called predictions of the death of only eminent persons who are no more in the land of the living, and thus not available for verificat on Unlike these charlatans who seek newspaper publicity to advertise their fraudulent trades Mr Anonymous appears to be just a pious and blind believer in the supernatural powers of imag nary gods, goddesses and demons

Out of his piety, goodness and utter ignorance Mr Anonymous states, "Even in Mr Kovoor there are seeds of divinity for we can all reach up to the stars" with divine help It would be good for this credulous ignoramus to know that man is going to reach the moon entirely by the help of science and technology, and not through any divine help Neither the athei-

stic Academy of Science in Russia, nor the NASA in America consult religious books and omniscient gods for their space research Although most religi ous pundits of today try to prove that their brand of religion is in perfect harmony with modern sc ence, none of the research laboratories stocks religious books for reference purpose

Mr Anonymous confirms his ignorance when he says, "We love each other and draw closer to each other in the true awareness of the divine light' This statement simply shows his lack of historical knowledge It is a well known historical fact that more human beings were killed on this planet for the sake of religion than for any other cause Is he not aware that even today people are killing each other because of religious conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in India, between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, between the so-called high and low castes in Jaffna? Instead of "drawing man closer to each other" the diversity of gods and their religions have made, and are still making, men hate each other!

Although Mr Anonymous came out with his chal lenge on 25-1-1969, he now states that I am the challenger, and that he is only a "belated acceptor" of one of my earlier challenges Yet, he exhibits his muddled reasoning in the very next sentence He says "I feel that as an acceptor Mr Kovoor is in no position to state terms" It is funny that I am both the challenger as well as the challenged Only an anonymous person can make such a non sensical statement in a newspaper without any feeling of shame

However, since he does not say which of my numerous challenges he is accepting I am giving below my permanent challenges which would remain in force till my death, so that he may tell me which one he is accepting

> I, Abraham T Kovoor of 'Tiruvalla' Pamankada Lane, Colombo-6 *do hereby state that* I am prepared to pay an award of 1,00 000 Sri Lanka Rupees to any one from any part of the world who can demonstrate supernatural or miraculous

powers under fool proof and fraud proof conditions This offer will remain till my death or till I find the first winner

Godmen, saints yogies sidhas, gurus swamijis, mahatmas acharyas, babas bhagawans ammas and numerous professors of astrology and palmistry who claim that they have miraculous or supernatural powers can win this Rs 1,00 000 award if they can perform any of the following "miracles'

1 Read the serial number of a sealed up currency note

2. Produce an exact replica of a currency note

3 Stand stationary on burning cinders for half a minute without blistering the feet

4 Materialise from nothing an object I ask

5 Move or bend a object using psychokinetic power

6 Read the thought of another person using telepathic power

7 Make an amputated limb grow even one inch by prayer, spiritual or faith healing power, Lourdes water, sand, holy ash etc

8 Leviate in the air by yogic power

9 Stop the heart beat for five minutes by yogic powers

10 Stop breathing for thirty minutes by yogic powers

11 Walk on water

12. Leave the body in one place and reappear in another place

13 Predict a future event

14 Develop creative intelligence or get enlightened through transcendental or yogic meditation

15 Speak or understand an unknown language as a result of rebirth or being possessed by a spirit holy or evil

16 Produce a ghost to be photographed

17 Disappear from the negative when photographed

18 Get out of a locked room through spiritual powers

19 Increase the quantity or weight of a substance by divine power
20 Detect a hidden object
21 Convert water into petrol or wine
22 Convert wine into blood
23 Palmists and astrologers, who hoodwink the gullibles by saying that palmistry and astrology are perfectly "scientific", can win my award if they can pick out correctly—within a 5 per cent margin of error-those of males, females the living and the dead from a set of ten palm prints or astrological charts giving the times of birth correct to the minute, and places of birth with their latitudes and longitudes

Sd ABRAHAM T KOVOOR

I hope Mr Anonymous will tell me through the columns of this newspaper which of the above challenges he is accepting As Mr Arya Pathirana of Kurunegala says, it is absolutely necessary that this anonymous person should reveal his identity, and state specifically what kind of "showdown" he is contemplating

As promised in my last reply, I will be giving him a list of men and women who will be accompanying me to face the challenge on 24th February 1969, at Thurstan College Hall But I like to tell Mr Anonymous categorically that neither I nor the ladies and gentlemen facing the challenge are prepared to strip in public to satisfy the god of Mr Anonymous. Of course, we don't mind Mr Anonymous performing a "strip tease" At least let the spectators enjoy a free show at the expense of this pious fool!

As I do not wish to give him even a flimsy excuse to back out, I am agreeing to this encounter being conducted at a so-called "place of worship" (I suggest the premises of the Raja Maha Vihara at Kelaniya as the venue, if the temple authorities are agreeable The open space available there may be just enough to accommodate the vast crowd

Without divulging his identity the challenger gave his final reply fixing the confrontation for 3rd March This was published in the **Times Weekender** of 24th February

"Meet me at the Makara Thorana" says
Kovoor's Defier

The Kovoor confrontation is fixed, the correspondence is closed, and theist and rationalist are now on their own Below is a reply to Mr K's challenges

22nd February, 1969

The Editor,
The Times Weekender,

Sir,

I wish to thank you for having on three Poya days given my acceptance of Mr Abraham Kovoor's challenge due publicity Last week, Mr Kovoor detailed his genetal challenge and asked me to name which section of his long written harangue I come under and which of his several challenges I accept

I have clearly stated that I wish to confront this gentleman and show him by the faith of my convictions that there is a God That is all I do not therefore fall into any of the categories Mr Kovoor describes I am *neither kattadiya or hooniyamkaraya* nor do I chant vas kavi or resort to charms or signs of devil worshippers *I do not wonder that all these* droll persons have so far failed for they have tried to fight Mr Kovoor's evil with their own Evil can never be fought with evil—only good Mr Kovoor will find that I am thus not conforming with his accepted ideas of wild-eyed fanatics who ask the powers of darkness to manifest themselves Rationalism and the denial of the spiritual is the most blanketing evil of all for it denies God and all His wonders

I thank you for having up to now preserved my anonymity I wish it to be so even now I would have dearly wished to have met Mr Kovoor this week, but since our tussle is now a week by week one, I find that this my reply, must first find its place in your Poya paper before Mr Kovoor and I can meet This letter is my reply I will be at the Kelaniya

Raja Maha Vihare at 8 a.m. on Poya day, the 3rd of March. Mr. Kovoor will find me under the Makara Thorana, after the flight of steps leading to the temple.

I will then identify myself to Mr. Kovoor with these words.

"I COME IN THE NAME OF GOD"

Mr. Kovoor may take any precautions he deems fit. As for me, I face him alone and, he may be assured, unarmed.

My name is not yet to be disclosed but I will give you permission to do so after the 3rd of March".

(Ed.—This correspondence is now closed)

In my replies I insisted on the following three specific conditions:

1. The challenger should reveal his identity before the 'showdown'.
2. The nature of the confrontation should be revealed in advance.
3. The challenger should be responsible for the expenses and arrangements in connection with the confrontation.

On 27th February, the chief priest of the Raja Maha Vihara, Kelaniya, informed me that nobody had sought permission from him, and that he was not in favour of any one exhibiting his "madness" within the premises of his temple.

This necessitated my making the following paid announcement in the **Times Weekender** and the **Daily News** for the benefit of the members of the Ceylon Rationalist Association and the public:—

> RATIONALISTS—As the encounter with the anonymous challenger is postponed till his identity is revealed, and the venue booked, members who volunteered to face the challenge with me are requested to wait till further announcement.

Why are these God's representatives, unlike rationalists, keen on doing things stealthily? His insistence to remain anonymous to the last confirmed my suspicion that he was determined to escape without personal humiliation. I must accept that I have failed in my hope to make a fool of this pious fanatic in public!

POSTSCRIPT:

Information just received from the newspaper office reveals the identity of the challenger as a European skin diver turned film producer and director, who recently preferred transcendental meditation to psychiatric treatment!

This accounts for the eccentric announcement about his appearance under the "Makarathorana" at 8 a m on 3rd March, shouting "I come in the name of God", without obtaining prior or later permission from the temple authorities, and finally failing to appear on the scene at the appointed hour!

Now that his identity is revealed, at least unofficially, will he come out in the open, courageously, and give a chance to the public to witness him performing a "strip tease" in the name of God to convince the rationalists that God exists?!!

Chapter—22

A SPIRITUALIST'S BLUFF

The self explanatory letters that were exchanged between Dr M H.M Nazeem, a "spiritualist', and myself are reproduced below

Watawala
27th Aug 1969

Dear Mr Kovoor,

I am a spiritualist and I understand that your Rationalist Association disseminates theory that there are no such beings as "spirits"

To me the existence of such spirits is a stark reality Nobody has ever disproved the existence of spirits but have merely taken the lack of evidence of such spirits as a denial of their existence This in my view, is not rational thinking I believe that the theoretical basis of the nature of spirits lies in the true conception of the real nature of matter and its interconnection with energy, and I have no doubt that with time, spiritual phenomena will be theoretically conceivable

Regarding evidence of spirits, I am prepared to effectively demonstrate the manifestation of a spirit, on any day (except Poya days) between sunset and dawn This challenge is only to your association and not meant for public display As such I would prefer not to have any newspaper publicity, unless there is a genuine and valid purpose in doing so

For this demonstration I would suggest three persons from your Association, three judges of your choice, together with one or two persons of my choice to be present The venue could be any place you suggest not necessarily a place of religious worship

I would be pleased to clarify further details

Yours sincerely,
Sgd (Dr) M H M Nazeem

In a reply (copy not available) I invited Dr Nazeem to drop in at my residence to "clarify further details

— O —

Watawala
26th September, 1969

Dear Mr Kovoor,

Received your letter of 17-9-1969, and thanks for the same I appreciate very much your interest in the matter concerned

However, there's no need to drop in at your place for a chat as you suggest, because this is not intended to be a theoretical exercise, but a practical demonstration of spiritual manifestation Besides, I am sure you'll agree, that travelling to Colombo and back from here, away from the main purpose, is going to be an expensive business and wasteful expenditure

As such, I shall give you details of what I propose to show as set out below

On any night (week days), one of you shall light an oil lamp (preferably) or a candle in a room with all other lights off, and come out after locking the door firmly with the key All present (including myself) shall remain outside the locked room

Within five minutes, the locked door will open on its own simultaneously the lamp or candle being extinguished After about ten minutes, the lamp or candle will relight on its own, and the door will lock itself again

As further evidence of the spirit entering the room— if there is an expensive lamp hanging from the ceiling I will cause it to be dashed to the floor in the vacant room

If you are interested, please let me know about three weeks in advance, before fixing a date

Awaiting to hear from you,

Yours sincerely,
Sgd (Dr) M H M Nazeem

89, Pamankada Lane, Colombo-6.
28-9-1969.

Dr. M. H. M. Nazeem,
Watawala.

Dear Sir,

Thanks for your offer to demonstrate the "manifestation of spirits" by (1) extinguishing a candle flame, (2) opening a locked door by itself, (3) relighting the extinguished flame, (4) relocking the opened door and (5) dashing to the floor a ceiling fan (as there is no hanging lamp available).

I am fixing Thursday 30th October, 1969 for the demonstration at the above address between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. Please let me know before the 15th October whether you will be coming or not for the demonstration.

In the absence of any reply before that date, I will have to reject your claim as mere bluff, as I have done in the case of a few so-called "spiritualists" who made similar claims in the past, but failed to turn up on the appointed dates.

Hoping that you are not like one of those charlatans.

I remain,
Yours faithfully,
Sgd. Abraham T. Kovoor.

— O —

Watawala,
6th October, 1969

Dear Mr. Kovoor,

I am in receipt of your letter of 28-9-1969. Thank you for your prompt reply.

However, I would be much obliged if you could make a slight change in the date proposed by you. I find it convenient, any day (week days) after November 19th, and expect it'll be alright by you.

Hope you would not treat this as a subtle attempt to get away and as such anticipating a fresh date by you.

Regrets for any inconvenience that may have arisen.

Yours sincerely,
Sgd. (Dr.) M. H. M. Nazeem

89, Pamankada Lane, Colombo 6
8th October, 1969

Dr M H M Nazeem,
Watawala,

Dear Sir,

As requested in your letter of 6-10 69 I am fixing 22nd November between 7 p m and 9 p m for the demonstration of your spiritual powers

Please confirm if you are accepting this date and time

Yours faithfully,
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

89, Pamankada Lane, Colombo 6
1-11 1969

Dr M H M Nazeem,
Watawala

Dear Sir,

Kindly let me know whether you will be coming to demonstrate your so-called spiritual powers on 22nd November, as you have mentioned in your letters

If I do not get any reply, I will have to release the whole thing to the press and expose your bluff so that innocent credulous persons may not become victims of your fraud in future

Yours faithfully,
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

— O —

Watawala,
7th November, 1969

Dear Mr Kovoor,

Received your letter of 1-11-1969 and regret to inform you that I do not appreciate the tone of its contents

You seem to "see things before your eyes are opened", and form opinions without any facts to examine This is a clear deviation from a scientific approach—I refer to certain comments in the last paragraph of your letter, in which you state, "If I do not get any reply, I will have to expose your bluff so that innocent credulous persons may not become victims of your fraud in future"

This suggests that I am already bluffing innocent people On what facts did you come to this conclusion?, especially when I have confined this "demonstration" to a select aud ence, so that even if I did not reply, it could only mean that I have bluffed you and only you

Further, in my last letter I simply asked for a postponement of the date by a mere two weeks and had specifically requested you not to treat it as an attempt to bluff I hope you will adopt a better attitude in the future

However, I shall quite definitely be at your address on 22-11-1969, as arranged, sometime between 7 p m and 9 p m

Looking forward to meet you

Yours sincerely,
Sgd (Dr) M H M Nazeem

P S

Please arrange for a newspaper man to be present if possible

—O—

89 Pamankada Lane Colombo-6
8-11-69

Dr M H M Nazeem
Watawala

Dear Sir,

Thanks for your letter dated 7-11 69 I am extremely glad to hear that you are "definitely" com ng on 22-11 69 for the demonstration I will be making all the necessary arrangements here As requested by you I will make an effort to persuade newspapermen to be present that evening

I am sorry to see that the concluding paragraph of my last letter has offended you It seems that you have failed to notice the word 'if' in that sentence Now that you have replied—even though after a lapse of three weeks—I have no more reason to infer that you are bluffing at least till 22-11-69 But, if you fail to turn up that day, I may have to revise my present opinion again

You say that I am seeing things before my eyes are opened In this connection I explain why I am "seeing things" so

In the past, numerous persons like you have told me personally and through letters and newspapers that they have spiritualistic and paranormal powers to perform miracles Most of them failed to appear on the scene whenever a confrontation was arranged

All those who faced the various tests I did conduct in the past have failed miserably From these I came to the conclusions that the former types were bluffers, and the latter, victims of cryptopsychism

Thus it is because of my past experience that I am now able to "see things even before my eyes are opened"

May I hope that your demonstration will help me to revise the present opinion of mine

Hoping to meet you in person on 22 11 69

I remain,

Yours sincerely

Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

On 24th November 1969, the following news item appeared in The Times of Ceylon

A WALK-OVER FOR KOVOOR

(By a correspondent)

He never came, so we never saw, and Ceylon's ace rationalist Abraham Kovoor got a walk over

He—a "doctor" from Watawala—was the latest to take up Kovoor's challenge to prove that spirits exist He, according to a protracted correspondence with Mr Kovoor had promised to stage a demonstration at Kovoor's Welawatte house between 7 and 9 p m on Saturday

We were the eager audience waiting to witness the demonstration Among us were a Methodist Minister, two university dons and two journalists

The "doctor" from Watawala reportedly had offered to demonstrate the manifestation of spirits by

extinguishing a candle flame, opening a locked door, relighting the extinguished flame and relocking the opened door—all without the aid of any human agency

The only door that was locked as far as we were concerned was Kovoor's front door, which was shut on us sharp at 9 p m

89, Pamankada Lane,
26-11-1969

Dr M H M Nazeem,
Watawala

Dear Sir,

By your failure to turn up on 22nd November, you have m sused me, our Association and several distinguish ed men and women who had assembled to judge and witness your promised demonstration

If, within one week, you do not either come and demonstrate your tall claims, or accept in no dubious terms the fact that you have no spiritualistic powers, I will be placing the whole matter in the hands of the law-en forcing authorities so that you may not continue cheating the public

Please understand that no excuse other than complying with either of the two stipulated conditions will stop me from taking action against you

Yours faithfully,
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

89, Pamankada Lane,
2-12-1969

The Inspector General of Police,
Colombo

Respected Sir,

Enclosed I am sending copies of the correspondence that took place between one Dr M H M Nazeem of Watawala and myself as the president of the Ceylon Rationalist Association

Depending on his written undertaking I made all the necessary arrangements for him to demonstrate his claim

of miraculous powers on 22nd November, 1969 I invited the press and many distinguished persons to act as judges

Since he neither turned up that day nor informed me of his inability to come, I feel that he was deliberately misusing me, our Association and the numerous respectable and distinguished ladies and gentlemen who assembled that day

I, on behalf of the Ceylon Rationalist Association, therefore request you to kindly take necessary steps to prevent him from perpetrating a similar hoax, and cheat the public

I suspect that even his doctorate is a fake meant to hoodwink the public.

I remain,
Sgd Abraham T Kovoor
(President, C.R.A.)

Chapter—23

CLAIRVOYANT GIRL OF MIRIGAMA

One Mr Ch nthamani Mohotti, who claims that he ha: a centre for "occult investigation and spiritual healing' at Maradana in Colombo, is the editor of a Sinhalese weekly by name **Silumina.** This paper specialises in publishing all kinds of occult nonsense Since the majority of people in Sri Lanka believe in the occult, this paper has a fairly good circulation

On Friday, February 3, 1978, **Silumina** published on the first page an article about the clairvoyant powers of Asiline, a 19-year old girl of Mirigama It was written that one Kaluarachchi blindfolded Asiline, and made her read many things including the serial number of a currency note that was kept in a closed box My photo as well as that of Asiline appeared prominently on the first page.

At the end of the article there was an invitation to both myself and Dr Carlo Fonseka to come and see the clairvoyant powers of this "Psychic" girl

On the same day I wrote the following letter to the editor of Silumina

Dear Editor,

"The front page article in today's issue of your paper describing the clairvoyant powers of the girl Asiline of Mirigama was read and translated to me by a member of Sri Lanka Rationalist Association In that you have invited Dr Carlo Fonseka and myself to test the ability of the said girl to read the serial number of a sealed up currency note

I invite the author of the article to bring this clairvoyant girl to the public monthly meeting of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association on March 12th. 1978 at 5 p m at Thurstan College Hall so that we may test her under fraud proof conditions If she

succeeds to read correctly the number on a sealed up note she will be entitled to my award of One Lakh rupees stipulated in my permanent challenge

No earnest deposit is needed if the girl can be brought to our meeting On the other hand if you want me or Dr Carlo Fonseka or a nominee of ours to go to the girl s residence an earnest deposit of Rs 1 000 will have to be made to the treasurer of the S L.R A This amount will be refunded if the girl succeeds A copy of my permanent challenge is enclosed so that you may publish a translat on of it in your paper

Hope you will publish a translation of this reply in your paper

Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

To the above letter I received the following reply dated February 27, 1978 —

OCCULT INVESTMENT AND SPIRITUAL HEALING CENTRE

105/2/2 Jayntha Weerasekera Rd Col 10

OCCULT POWERS

Dear sir;

With reference to your letter on the above subject dated 3rd February 1978 I wish to stress the point that we are also an organisation dedicated to the investigations of occult powers in order to know the truth and bring that information to the masses By my article in S lumina I did not challenge you but extended only a friendly invitation to examine the abilities of the girl in question

If your good self could prove that the abilities of Asiline of Mirigama are to the contrary we are prepared to g ve the same prominence and publicity to that effect through our paper It is not a difficult thing to deposit Rs 1 000/ and come before the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association for the test But in my opinion it is better if both parties could get to-

gether and investigate into the truth of the whole episode

This girl in question could give the number of a currency note correctly when it is kept in a metal or wooden box which has a pin hole in it When she performs this her eyes are closed with a black cloth. I was informed by Mr Kaluarachchi that only if the "spirit fr end' is agreeable to accept the word "enve lope" the girl can correctly tell the number of the currency note kept in it But without keeping the note in an envelope it may be kept in any type of box (metal or wood) which should have a very small hole in it

This is not the only phenomenon that she performs When she is fast asleep with her eyes bandaged with a black cloth she could read any book She can even draw the p cture of an object which you suggest

In my opinion it is feas ble for both of us to de- cide a common venue and panel of judges from both sides to examine the abilities of this girl Thank ng you and anticipating a favourable reply

Sgd C Mohotti
Editor, Silumina

To this, I wrote the following reply —

Dear Sir,

"I am in receipt of your reply of February 27 There is nothing miraculous in a so-called blindfold ed person reading the number on a currency note while he or she is looking through a hole into the box in which the note is kept open It only shows that the blindfolding is imperfect, and the person is reading what is seen If your aim is to show others that the said girl is capable of reading by her 'psychic powers' without making use of her eyes the best and fraud proof test is by keeping the matter to be read away from her sight instead of blindfolding her Since there is no possibility of making sure whether the tested person could see through the blindfold or not, I do not think that it is a fool proof test

In your letter you say "This girl in question could give the number correctly of the currency note when it is placed in a metal or wooden box which has a pin hole in it When she performs this her eyes are closed with a black cloth You further say that the note should not be kept in a closed envelope, but open with its face upward

"This clearly shows that the girl is incapable of reading anything she cannot see However, I am prepared to test the so called psychic power of this girl under the conditions stipulated by you except that the box containing the note will be kept one yard away from her She need not be blindfolded. Instead of one pin hole you can have any number of them provided that the holes are one or more inches apart Please bring this girl to our next meeting at Thurstan College Hall on March 12th 1978

On February 26th 1978 I was invited to witness a 'psychic display' at the Y M B A, Dehiwala by the same girl Asiline presented by her trainer Mr Kaluarachchi In the notification it was mentioned that it would be a psychic display by the help of meditation and spirits

What I saw was an act of deception by the crafty Kaluarachchi This girl and another boy were subjected to a sham hypnosis and then blindfolded They were able to read and identify many pictures shown by Kaluarachchi from a magazine brought by Kaluarachchi himself but could not read any of the things I showed because what I showed were in closed envelopes In fairness to the vast crowd in the hall, who had paid Rs 7 50 and downward for their seats, I had to tell them the truth that the whole thing was a hoax on the part of the organisers to make some money in the guise of "psychic display All those who were present were convinced that what they saw in the guise of meditation and spirit possession were nothing but a third rate magic show!

May I take this opportunity to tell you frankly that your 'Spiritual Healing" is as fictitious as Kaluarachchi s "psychical display". Like you there are

numerous spiritual healers among Christians Hindus and Muslims What they do is in a class with that of the kattadiyas or the witch-doctors What they do can have psychological effects on feeble minded gullibles! Can you make an amputated limb or finger grow even half an inch by your "spiritual healing"?

Sgd Abraham T Kovoor

None of the three persons—Mohotti, Kaluarachchi and Asiline—were present at the monthly meeting of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association on March 12, 1978 That ended the much publicised clairvoyant power of Asiline!

Chapter—24

GHOST IN THE BATHROOM

The twelve year old Noonıya was the apple of her parents' eyes She was blessed with beauty, health and intelligence Her jovial disposition together with her ability to join other children freely in games dance and songs made her very popular among her playmates and schoolmates

At Wolfendhal Girls' High School, where she was a student she had never failed in any examination At the last promotion examination her rank was fifth in a class of thirty five She was first in the class for speech and arithmetic

Sudden Change

Noonıya's home in Messenger Street in Colombo was a happy one till July 31, 1964 From th s date a sudden change took place both in Noonıya as well as the other members of the household Noonıya started be having entirely unlike herself Her jovial ty seemed to have left her Her eyes appeared bigger than normal They were protruding and moist

With n ghtfall each day she started to cry loudly with violent physical contortions and struggling The father and mother found it difficult to control her Several times she attempted to run away from home Noth ng could appease her When she was asked for the reason of her cry, all what she said was that someone was trying to strangle her. During the bout of fear she talked incoherently On certain occasions she appeared to be in a trance, and started talking like a cousin of hers who died a few months earlier She subsided only when she got exhausted fully as a result of fatigue.

Charms

Nooniya's behaviour upset all the other members of the family Close relat ons of the family started visiting them—some out of sympathy and others out of curiosity But all of them were liberal in giving free counsels to the parents about the "best way" to put a stop to the trouble Names of numerous kapuralas and exorcists were mentioned During times of such dire calamities it is not unusual for people, even if they happen to be in telligent, to fall victims to quacks and charlatans

The first exorcist to be brought home was a "vaithyar" (a native physician) from Dean's Road, popularly known by the nick name Vella Kuruvi This man after prolong ed chanting of manthras, tied five knots in Nooniya's hair Then he tied a safron-coloured thread on the biceps of Nooniya's right hand After collecting his fee, Vella Kuruvi left saying that there will be no more troubles But the next morning the girl started crying as usual

A couple of days later a Malay charmer was brought on the recommendation of one of the neighbours This man wrote on a piece of paper some Arabic verses from the Koran, folded it into a cyl ndrical piece, and tied it up with a black thread This was then dipped in melted paraffin wax to make it water-proof Then it was tied on a black thread on wh ch about twenty one knots were made After tying this on Nooniya's neck, he too col lected his fee, and departed Still the girl continued to cry

The third magic healer to be brought was an old Muslim from Union Place in Colombo This man's method of driv ng away the evil spirit was by smoking it out, just like snakes and rats are smoked out of their holes In a vessel he put some dry donkey dung and set fire to it When thick fumes started coming from the dung, he took the vessel and passed it several times round the girl's body, all the time chanting something in Arabic He too was paid his fee though no good came out of it either

A Change

As the intensity of Nooniya's fear and crying started to increase whenever she had to go to the bathroom near the kitchen, some friends of the family suggested that she should be removed from the house for a few days. Thus, it was finally decided to send Nooniya to her aunt's house. She stayed away for a few days, and her condition changed for the better. But after a few days she wanted to come back home.

When she was brought back, the trouble started again with added intensity. Now she began to complain about the ghost of a dead cousin of hers calling to go with her. The parents got more alarmed now because of the mention of a ghost They decided to get the assistance of more powerful kattadiyas.

The fourth of a series of kattadiyas to be brought home was another old Muslim gentleman from Siripina Lane, Colombo. Like the former exorcists, he too tied a few charmed threads on the wrist and neck of the girl. But they too were futile.

The next was a Sinhalese kattadiya called Gurunnanse from Barber Street, Colombo His verdict was that it was the result of a charm performed by some of the enemies of the family, and that it could be removed by a lime-cutting ceremony. An expensive lime-cutting ceremony was performed, and a talisman was tied on the neck of Nooniya.

The lime-cutting ceremony too being a failure, they decided to bring a reputed Muslim priest—a Malayalee—from Maskeliya. He conducted chanting and prayers for two days. The priest finally handed over a talisman to the father of the girl with the instruction that it should be kept inside the pillow of the girl without the knowledge of the girl. This too had no beneficial effects.

Having spent a substantial fortune on six exorcists, and failed, the parents were now prepared to listen to an educated friend of the family, who from the very start was critical about seeking the help of exorcists for the mental trouble of the girl.

To Kovoor

On 20th August 1964 Nooniya's father Ahamed and uncle Ameed came to me with a letter of introduction from Mr M M Thowfeek, a sub editor of an English newspaper Messrs Ahamed and Ameed gave me a vivid description of what had happened in the house After listening to all what they had to say, I asked them to bring the girl on 24th August 1964 at 2 30 p m On the appointed day a party of four men three women and two boys arrived at Pamankada Lane, escorting Nooniya The girl appeared to be in a trance, and had to be led into the house supported by two women

Leaving the whole party in the waiting room my wife took Nooniya alone to the consulting room upstairs First she was reluctant to go up But after some coaxing and kind words Nooniya simply followed Mrs Kovoor

Nooniya's body was bedecked with numerous charmed threads and talismans They were the curative medicines of six black and white magicians who treated Nooniya To begin with, I cut away all the threads and talismans with a pair of scissors She was then made to lie down on a couch and relax

Under hypnosis Nooniya opened out her sub-conscious mind and began to talk freely I was able to gather the following information from her —

Nooniya was extremely fond of her cousin Zarina On 14th May 1964 Zarina spent the day with Nooniya at her house Throughout the day both girls were engaged in play and merry making Towards evening Zarina complained of a severe pain in the head She was shown to the family doctor the next day The family doctor finally decided that it was a case for a brain specialist Two eminent Neuro surgeons of Sri Lanka examined Zarina and found that she was having a brain tumour which had remained latent for some time Both of them decided that it was a case for immediate operation With the parents' consent Zarina was operated on successfully at the General Hospital But the surgeons were not happy about the outcome Zarina remained unconscious for two days and died on 18th May 1964

Zarina's untimely death was a severe shock to all her relations, particularly to Noonıya, her bosom friend Zarina's body was brought home from the hospital and was buried the next day Though none of the children were allowed to see the dead body, Noonıya, out of her desire to have a last look at her intimate friend, crept in between the women and had a peep at the body The body was fully shrouded in white cloth except the face

As days passed by, the memory of Zarina's death gradually disappeared from the minds of all at home, but not so easily from the tender minds of the small children at home Noonıya and her brothers continued to talk about the happy days when Zarina used to play with them

The Ghost

On the night of 15th July 1964 when all the children were asleep, Noonıya's younger brother Naina got up from his bed and ran to his mother saying that he saw Zarina's ghost in the corner of his room high up in the air The mother got alarmed Yet she decided to take Naina to his room and have a look at the ghost herself Naina pointed to the ghost in the corner of the room When the light was switched on they saw a petticoat hanging from a cloth line Naina was convinced that it was only a petticoat which he had mistaken for Zarina's ghost

The next day Naina and his mother told the funny story to the other members of the family, and all of them had a hearty laugh over the incident Though it was a simple matter for laughter for the rest of the family, it was not so for the sensitive Noonıya She became very gloomy from that day

On 31st July 1964 she went to the bathroom through the dark passage from the kitchen There in the dark bathroom she saw the face of Zarina's ghost, the body being completely shrouded in white cloth She ran out with a loud cry That night she was afraid to sleep alone She slept with her mother, but during the sleep she cried loudly and woke up She said Zarina's ghost was calling her to go with it When she refused to go with it, she said, the ghost attempted to strangle her.

Since then Nooniya has seen Zarina's face several times whenever she looked into dark corners in the house

Under a long spell of hypnotic suggestions I succeeded in removing from Nooniya s subconscious mind all the thoughts about Zarina s non-existent ghost She woke up from her hypnotic sleep with a pleasant smile on her face She ran down the stairs to her relatives with a broad smile The parents and the other relatives who had not seen any sign of a smile on Nooniya s face dur ing the past twenty four days were thrilled with joy

The party which came to my house with mental agony and heavy hearts left the house as a happy band after thanking me and my wife profusely On leaving my house Nooniya invited both of us to her home in Mes senger Street

A month later we visited Nooniya's house She was at school when we went there The grateful parents sent a boy with a note from the father to the Principal of Wolfendhal G rls' High School In ten minutes Nooniya ran into the house in her jovial happy mood We spent about an hour with the family and left fully satisfied that we had saved an intelligent girl from becom ng a permanent neurotic as the result of the superstitious be-liefs of the parents

Analysis

Nooniya l ke almost all other children in this as well as other countries grew up in a society which believes that disembodied spirits escape from bodies when people die She like other children has heard from her elders numerous ghost stories For twenty four days she was a victim of neurosis caused by hallucinations in her brainwashed mind Had she been brought up with the scientific knowledge that neither life nor m nd could exist separated from the body she would not have had the hallucination of seeing the non existing ghost of Zarina

It was also the same type of belief that made Nooniya's brother Naina conjure up Zarina's body in a petticoat which he saw hanging on a cloth line It was a clear case of visual illusion created in a brainwashed mind The visual sight of the white petticoat in a semi-dark room acted

as a trigger on the fear-stricken Naina's mind to create a mental picture of Zarina's body in the petticoat. This happened because the thought of Zarina's death, and the existence of her ghost capable of moving and appearing in any place, was fresh in his mind.

The story of Naina mistaking a petticoat for Zarina's ghost was good fun for the grown-ups in the house, but not for the brainwashed tender mind of Nooniya. From that day the fear of Zarina's ghost was haunting her subconscious mind. It was this fear which was responsible in creating a hallucinatory picture of Zarina's face in Nooniya's mind whenever she looked towards dark places in the house. She saw the body of Zarina's ghost shrouded in white cloth because it was in that condition that she saw Zarina's corpse. That there was no reality in the appearance of the ghost is very well proved by the fact that the ghost she saw was shrouded. Surely there cannot be any ghost for the shroud even if Zarina had one!

When all such artificially created fears about ghosts were removed, at least temporarily, from Nooniya's mind by hypnotic suggestions, she became her normal self again.

Prevention is any way better than cure If children are not brainwashed from childhood in beliefs about ghost, we will succeed in reducing the number of patients seeking admission to our mental hospitals.

From statistical evidence I can boldly say that over 50% of mental patients are sick as a result of their blind beliefs in religious superstitions they were taught in their impressionable ages by ignorant parents, priests and even teachers!

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
BOMBAY-7
53972
LIBRARY

Chapter—25

POLTERGEIST IN THE NORTH

On Tuesday 25th April 1965 Mr S nnatampi a staff officer in a mercantile firm in Colombo came to meet me He had a long story to tell He said that his ances tral home at Karainagar in Jaffna was being 'haunted' for the last two months and that h s parents and sister were living there in mortal fear Though they had spent a lot of money on soothsayers charmists and exorcists, the trouble was getting from bad to worse day by day It had come to such a stage that they were thinking of leaving the house to stay somewhere else

I asked him to give me some idea about the activities of the poltergeist He said that stones were being thrown in the house both during day and night Many articles got lost from the house D rt and sand appeared in the r ce and curry even when they were being cooked Mem bers of the house fell ill one after the other Money got lost Bottles and empty tins flew about and crashed to the ground Stones were thrown even on some kattadiyas (exorcists) when they were conducting a thovil

Mr Sinnatampi begged of me to go with h m to Jaffna by plane to stop the trouble and return the same evening I looked into my appointment diary and found that I was not free for the next ten days Hence I told him thus — "You are sure to have read at least some of my articles in the newspapers wherein I have explain ed that all poltergeistic activities are the workings of human beings You will do well to go to Jaffna and ask all the members in the household to be on the watch both day and night to catch the person responsible After having caught the person you can bring him or her as the case may be to me for hypnotic cure of the mental condition which made that person do such acts That would be easier and cheaper than myself and my wife coming all the way to Karainagar disappointing the

numerous persons who have made appointments to meet me here"

I took this opportunity to convince Sinnatampi by scientific reasoning that there are no ghosts in existence to do the so-called poltergeistic activities, and that all such incidents are the result of actions cleverly done by some mentally deranged persons Sinnatampi left in a happy mood promising that he would somehow catch the culprit and bring that person to me

On 11th May 1965, Sinnatampi came back with a heavy heart and a disappointed look He said thus — 'Mr Kovoor we are positively sure that it is an evil spirit which is giving us all these troubles We have been on the lookout for the last two weeks We are quite sure that it is not anyone at home who is doing all these things I myself took a week's leave and stayed at home to see if I could detect the person We are now fully convinced that it is not the work of any human being You will have to kindly help us May I book two return air tickets for you and Mrs Kovoor to fly to Jaffna?' I agreed

Both myself and my wife left with Sinnatampi to Jaffna by an Air Ceylon plane on Wednesday 13th May 1965 We reached Palali Airport at 9 a m Sinnatampi's father Mr Thanapathipillai was waiting for us at the Airport The four of us reached Karainagar by car at about 10 a m

All the inmates of the house came to the gate to receive myself and my wife The members of the family came home only that morning from the Selvasannidhi Temple at Point Pedro As a final effort to get rid of the poltergeistic trouble the whole family had gone on a pilgrimage to worship the powerful God Murugan in that temple They stayed there for about ten days offering poojas and prayers daily On getting a telegram from Sinnatampi informing them about my visit, the family came back home that morning

The first thing both myself and my wife did on reaching the house was to go round the whole house and garden to inspect the whole place It was a typical Jaffna homestead with the garden fenced all round with palmyra leaves The gardens to the right and rear of the com-

pound were vacant plots overgrown with numerous palmyra seedlings The garden to the left was occupied by a distant relative of Thanapathipillai

Mr Thanapathipillai aged 65, was a pensioner from Singapore He was employed as a clerk at the Singapore harbour During the Japanese occupation of Malaya he and his wife Ponnamma (60) came away to Jaffna for good, with their daughter Pakiam (35) and son Sinnatampi (32) The present haunted house at Karainagar was built by Thanapathipillai with his savings at Singapore The house was a solid substantial one with heavy doors of satin wood elaborately carved with beautiful designs There was an out-house in the rear, where garden implements and farm produce were stored Pakiam's husband was a rich merchant at Ja ela She had three daughters—Devanayaki (13), Sukirtham (8) and Selvamalar (4) The two elder girls were students at a mixed school at Karainagar

After our inspection of the house and the garden I came to the drawing room and asked Sinnatampi and Thanapathipillai whether they could make arrangements at a hotel or Rest House for our lunch Both of them insisted that we should have lunch with them I accepted the invitation on one condition I wanted Devanayaki to be kept in the drawing room until I called her for questioning Sinnatampi undertook to keep the girl in the drawing room without even asking me why I insisted that she alone should be detained there

Just after this we moved into the out house to conduct our investigations First the three grown ups—Thanapathipillai Ponnamma and Pakiam—were questioned collectively Later each and every member of the family except Ponnampalam who was away at Ja-ela and infant Selvamalar, were questioned individually and in complete privacy The following information gathered as the result of the investigation was recorded by my wife in my Case Book —

During the last week of January 1965 Thanapathipillai fell ill with acute pain in the ankle and knee of his right leg Though medicated oils and kashayas were used there was no appreciable relief for his sufferings Two

weeks later Ponnamma too fell ill She had diarrhoea Because of the unprecedented illness for two members of the family Thanapathipillai thought, in addition to the medicines it was safer to consult a reputed soothsayer in a neighbouring village, who was a fisherman by profession

The next morning Thanapathipillai went to a soothsayer, made the offering of Rs 10 folded in a few betel leaves The soothsayer looked into Anjanam and said that Thanapathipillai's house was under the spell of an evil spirit, sent as the result of a powerful charm got done by a relation by name Lakshmi This evil spirit could be chased away only after performing a powerful counter charm The soothsayer himself volunteered to perform the counter charm on a payment of Rs 150

The counter charm ceremony was performed during the third week of February 1965 In addition to the fee of Rs 150 Thanapathipillai had to supply a lot of expensive articles needed for the ceremony The whole ceremony cost Thanapathipillai about Rs 250 Yet apart from slight reliefs of pain in the case of Thanapathipillai, the condition of Ponnamma got worse

Two days later, when Thanapathipillai was taking his morning ablutions at the well he kept his artificial denture on a stone near by After he finished his wash he found that the denture was not on the stone Although intensive searches were made to this day the denture was not recovered

Both Thanapathipillai and Ponnamma confirmed that the evil spirit which was giving them trouble was responsible for the disappearance of the denture From that day more mysterious things started happening The keys from the various doors in the house disappeared one after another A collapsible tube of tooth paste disappeared from the windowsill of one of the bedrooms A bottle of medicinal tablets which was brought from the Government Dispensary for Ponnamma's diarrhoea was found missing Two days later it was found hidden under a box in the kitchen.

Towards the first week of March things took a different turn Small and big stones started falling in various

rooms Most of the stones fell in the morning till about 9 a m and in the evening from about 2 p m to about 9 p m

At this stage a reputed exorcist by name Sivaperuman was brought This exorcist who in normal life was in charge of a small Railway station in the North claimed that he had supernatural powers over evil spirits Like the soothsayer fisherman Sivaperuman too looked into Anjanam and said that an enemy had buried a powerful charm in Thanapathipillai's garden and that if it was removed, all the troubles in the house would stop He volunteered to remove the charm on a fee of Rs 1000 Thanapathipillai was alarmed at the large fee claimed by Sivaperuman But Sivaperuman said that he always charged high fees because he was not a mere charlatan like other kattadiyas To convince Thanapathipillai about his reputation and ability he said that once he was paid Rs 5000 by an ex prime minister for removing the spell of a charm done against him by another ex prime minister

After a bit of bargaining Thanapathipillai agreed to pay Rs 500 if he could remove the charm effectively As an advance Sivaperuman was paid Rs 250 then and there The same evening Sivaperuman came with a cloth bag containing various articles for conducting a pooja He started the pooja at about 10 p m on the outer verandah By about midnight he went out into the garden measured certain distances from the house, and asked Thanapathipillai to dig at a special spot When he had dug about two feet deep he asked the son in law Ponnampalam to take the crowbar from Thanapathipillai and continue to dig the pit deeper When the pit was about four feet deep S vaperuman said that he had to perform a special pooja near the pit with no clothes on his body He went to a s de of the house stripped himself fully naked and came to the pit Though there was no lamp light in the garden Sivaperuman s nude figure could be seen clearly in the moonlight, hence all the women folk went into the house. Now Sivaperuman started digg ng chanting some slokas all the while and finally he pulled out of the pit a rolled up copper foil which had some writings on it in a strange language

According to Thanapathipillai and Sinnatampi, the metallic foil had the shine of fresh copper Both of them strongly suspected that Sivaperuman introduced the foil himself and was pretending that he discovered it in the pit Sivaperuman went back to the place where he kept his clothes and came back properly dressed He said that there would be no more trouble in the house But Thanapathipillai Ponnampalam and Sinnatampi were not at all convinced, hence Thanapathipillai said that the balance of Rs 250 would be paid the next day if the troubles stopped

To the disappointment of all at home the stones continued to fall as usual the next day also Thanapathipillai went to the Railway Station to tell the state of affairs to Sivaperuman and bring him again once more But Sivaperuman declined to go to Karainagar again on the pretext that he would be busy at the station for the next few days He did not even claim the balance

The English educated Sivaperuman's exorcisms instead of stopping the troubles in the haunted house at Karainagar, made the matters worse From that time onwards sand and human excreta began to appear in the rice even while being cooked On numerous occasions the whole family had to go without food because of the appearance of dirt in it

One morning a friend of the family stepped into the house on his way to Jaffna town to discuss certain matters with Thanapathipillai He had with him a leather bag containing some important documents He left the bag on the table in the drawing room to join Thanapathipillai for some light refreshments When he came back the leather bag was not to be seen on the table Although a thorough search was made in the house and the garden it was not recovered

Once Pakiam went to the well with her three daughters for a bath She kept a five rupee note hidden under the clothes near the well After the bath when she looked for the currency note it was not to be seen anywhere

Ponnampalam the husband of Pakiam was told by some of his friends at Jaela that there was a famous kattadiya in Ja-ela who could stop troubles in haunted houses With the help of Ponnampalam's driver arrange-

ments were made to take this kattadiya and party to Karainagar A party of two kattadiyas two roosters a few lime fruits betel leaves two bottles of arrack and a few other things needed for a thovil were taken by car to Karainagar They reached Thanapathipillai's house early morning on a Sunday

Devanayaki was sent to a boutique that morning to buy some thirty hoppers to feed the visitors from the South Devanayaki returned with a basket full of hoppers On opening the basket at home the girl started crying saying that the spirit had put sand in the hopper basket The sand coated hoppers were given to the cows and Devanayaki was sent again to buy some more Since the stock of hoppers in the boutique had finished she bought some string hoppers and brought them home But this time also the string hoppers were found to be coated with sand Finally Pakiam had to make pittu at home and feed the visitors

The two kattadiyas spent the whole of that day making the necessary preparations and decorations to conduct the thovil that night on a grand scale for the Tamils of the North to see The ceremonies started at about 9 p m and went on till the early hours of the next day It was to end up with the sacrifice of the two roosters At about 2 a m one of the kattadiyas went to the out house to fetch the roosters To his surprise he found that one of the roosters was let loose by the spirit They sacrificed the one cock which was left but when the neck-cutting ceremony was on they got a shower of stones on them The kattadiyas themselves got frightened They said that the spirit which was haunting the house was a very powerful one which could not be exorcised by ordinary thovils

Thanapathipillai was not at all satisfied with the result of the thovil The kattadiyas were paid Rs 100 and sent back to Ja-ela

Two days later Devanayaki complained of a severe pain in her left breast Pakiam found that her eldest daughter was getting a boil on the nipple of her left breast The whole family got alarmed and decided that it too was the result of the actions of the evil spirit Finally

they decided to go on a pilgrimage to the Selvasannidhi Temple at Point Pedro, and appeal to the god Murugan. They stayed for ten days in the madam attached to the temple with other pilgrims. Daily they offered flowers and money, and prayed to Murugan. For the first three days there was no trouble for the family, but on the fourth day stones started falling in the room occupied by the two ladies and the children They left that temple on the morning of 13th May on getting a telegram intimating the expected arrival of myself and my wife.

While Pakiam was being questioned in the out-house, I heard a big commotion going on in the front part of the house. Pakiam was sent to find what the matter was. She came back and said that her father Thanapathipillai was scolding a neighbouring woman by name Rajalakshmi who had come to know what was happening in the house and who the new visitors were. Pakiam said that Rajalakshmi was the person mentioned by the fisherman soothsayer as Lakshmi, the distant relative who had got the charm done against them.

The fifth person to be questioned was the 13-year-old Devanayaki. Unlike the others who were questioned earlier, I adopted a different technique in dealing with her. I started with the assurance that I was in the know of what had happened in the house, and that I knew who was responsible for them. Without any hesitation, and with a smile on her face, Devanayaki explained to me in answer to my questions, all what she had done during the previous two-and-a-half months. She told me that she had hidden the keys of the rooms, and the tube of toothpaste among the palmyrah leaves of the fence, the five rupee note in the leaf-pocket of young coconut palm near the well, and that she had thrown the leather bag among the young palmyrah plants in the adjoining compound. She said that she had nothing to do with the missing denture of the grandfather. She accepted that she herself was responsible for putting sand into the basket containing the hoppers and string hoppers.

She agreed to return all those articles before the next day. In return to that promise, I told her that I would not

tell anyone at her home that she was responsible for doing all those mischiefs

Having solved the problem to my satisfaction, both myself and my wife went into the main house to have our lunch After the lunch I got all the members of the family to assemble in the drawing room I spoke to them thus —

"This house was never under the spell of any charm or evil spirit Nobody had done any charm against them You must call all your neighbours whom you had suspected of having done charms against you, and apologise to them Rajalakshmi is innocent Out of your ignorance you have suspected her because of her name The fisherman soothsayer simply mentioned the name Lakshmi as the person who had got the charm done against you You have gullibly believed him, and since there was no Lakshmi among your relatives you have simply suspected Rajalakshmi Sivaperuman, the fisherman and the kattadiyas *were all frauds They were all cheating you to get money* from you Nobody in this world has such supernatural powers to make occultic predictions If there are persons like that they will be the richest persons in the world and need not depend on your small payments for their livelihood Light reading, Anjanameliya, card reading tumbler talks exorcism, etc are all mere humbug Only ignorant fools will believe such things

"You will have no more troubles in this house You will recover all the lost articles except the denture Probably the denture was taken by a crow Thanapathipillai's *rheumatism, Ponnamma's diarrhoea, and the boil on* Devarayaki's breast were all natural ailments It is foolish to think that physical and mental ailments are caused by the influence of evil spirits Primitive men had such foolish beliefs, and they resorted to witch crafts instead of medical treatments Modern society knows the value of science and medicine Witch-doctors still thrive in backward countries like ours Witch doctors are not appointed to our hospitals because intelligent men have found that there is absolutely no truth and value in magical treatments In future you should not spend even one cent on soothsayers and kattadiyas"

We returned to Colombo the same evening A week later I had a telephone call from Sinnatampi Happily he informed me that the trouble in his house had fully stopped All the lost articles, including the leather bag containing the valuable documents, were found next morning on the table in the drawing room I too felt happy at the result of my expedition to the North

Relapse

Three weeks later I had another telephone call from Sinnatampi He informed me that the spirit had started its pranks again after a lapse of two weeks A few stones had fallen again in the house I asked Sinnatampi to come home that evening

When Sinnatampi came home I told him the truth about the happenings in his house Since Devanayaki broke her promise to me, I knew I was fully justified in exposing her to the uncle I could see the expression of anger on Sinnatampi's face He was furious against Devanayaki for creating agony in the minds of the members of the household, and making them spend large amounts of money unnecessarily I told him that there was no need for getting angry towards the poor girl Instead of getting angry, the elders should have sympathy towards Devanayaki for her mental condition which encouraged her to do all those mischiefs I warned him neither to punish nor to scold her

I told Sinnatampi that a final solution to the whole problem can be had by bringing Devanayaki to stay for about a week in Colombo to be subjected to psychiatric treatment

Two days later Thanapathipillai and Ponnampalam came to my bungalow with Devanayaki I kept the elders in my drawing room and took the girl alone to my consulting room upstairs There she started to cry before me and promised that she would not repeat these acts again I told her that there was no point in making a promise to me a second time She was told that she had to make such a promise to her father and grandfather

Thanapathipillai and Ponnampalam were called up She made her promise to them with tears flowing down her

cheeks She was later subjected to deep hypnosis and given necessary suggestions She stayed with her father at Ja-ela for a week and was brought for a final hypnosis before she was taken back to Karainagar Both Ponnam palam and Thanapathipillai were instructed to show extra kindness and love towards Devanayaki

After seven months, in December 1965, a grateful Ponnampalam visited me with a large hamper of X'mas presents According to Ponnampalam Devanayaki had done exceptionally well in her studies and earned a creditable promotion There were absolutely no more troubles in the house

Explanation

How was it that the elders in the family were not able to detect that Devanayaki was doing all these mischiefs even when they were told through Sinnatampi that it was a human being that was doing all these things and not an evil spirit, although I could do it without much effort? The reason was that they were not fully convinced by my explanation Moreover, when Devanayaki herself started crying saying that the spirit had put sand in the basket containing the hoppers, how could they suspect her? Unlike Sinnatampi and his parents who were looking for the spirit I was looking for the person because I knew that a human being only can do such acts A spirit even if there is one which has no physical body, cannot do physical acts

When I met all the members of the family as I stepped into the house first I could spot out the poltergeist because Devanayaki's facial expressions betrayed her That was why I insisted that she should be kept in the drawing room till she was called for investigation Had I not taken this precaution, both myself and my wife would have had to go without lunch that day because she would have surely put human excreta or sand into the food which was being prepared in the kitchen

Devanayaki was a healthy girl physically She was good in her studies, and very popular in her school She took part in all possible games at school How is it that such

a healthy girl turned out to be a poltergeist? Here are my reasons

Devanayaki grew up as a darling pet of the family for five years Since she was the only child in the family she became the apple of the eyes of the parents and grandparents She was the centre of attraction and recipient of many presents Father Ponnampalam and uncle Sinnatampi brought presents for her every time they came home from the South Then when Sukirtham was born in her fifth year she found a rival in the small sister A subconscious jealousy started to germinate in her, although she used to fondle her baby sister. She found that the new baby in the house had now become the centre of attraction for all the elders in the house A subconscious hatred not only for Sukirtham but also for the elders in the house, began to develop in Devanayaki's mind

When Devanayaki was approaching the age of puberty, there were glandular, physical and mental changes in her. It was at this stage that Thanapathippillai and Ponnamma fell ill Instead of seeking medical treatment, they, who were brainwashed from their birth in superstitious beliefs, resorted to occult practices

Like all witch-doctors, Sivaperuman, the fisherman and the kattadiyas confirmed that the house was haunted by an evil spirit This confirmation acted as a trigger and gave Devanayaki courage to start her pranks as an expression of her jealousy complex She had the boldness to act because she knew that her gullible parents and grand-parents would suspect only the evil spirit about which the fisherman soothsayer and Sivaperuman had told them

How was it that Devanayaki who, in response to my request brought back all the missing articles and stopped doing further mischiefs, started throwing stones again after two weeks?

Devanayaki was aware that, since I did not tell the elders that she was responsible for all the mischiefs, they still believed that it was a spirit which was doing these acts She was also aware that I, who was the only person who knew the actual facts, was in Colombo far away from Karainagar This gave her courage to start the mischief

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slowly urged by the jealousy which was still lingering in her subconscious mind Had I hypnotized her at Karai nagar and extracted a promise in that state, she would have refrained from starting it aga n

Although I suspected Devanayaki when I met her first, my suspicion was confirmed when I heard from Thana pathipillai that sand was introduced into the basket of hoppers when she was all alone Moreover the stones did not fall in the house when Devanayaki was at school from 9 a m till 2 p m

Chapter—26

GHOST THAT COULD NOT BE CHASED BY HOLY WATER

In September 1956 my son Dr Aries T A Kovoor of the Sorbonne University, Paris, was at home with us on a two months' holiday One night when he came back after tennis from the flood-lit tennis courts at the Ratmalana Airport, he told me about a haunted house at Mutwal He heard at the tennis court from an audit accountant about some mysterious happenings in the house of one Mr Xavier working in one of the newspaper offices in Colombo

I told my son Aries to gather further information about the incidents and the whereabouts of the house so that I may make an on-the-spot investigation

Next evening when he came back after tennis he brought me not only the exact address of the house, but also the fact that Mr Xavier the householder would be only glad to allow me to make the investigation But he had one request He did not want me to take newspapermen with me My son, who had never seen a haunted house before, expressed his desire to accompany myself and his mother

Visit

At about 7 p m on 28th September 1956 we—my wife, son and myself—reached Mr Xavier's house at Mutwal Mr Xavier received us and led us to the drawing room Besides Mr Xavier the other inmates of the house were Mrs Xavier, two daughters aged 23 and 17, a son aged 5 and the eldest daughter's husband Wilson who was a clerk in a mercantile firm in Colombo They had no servants The married daughter was expecting her first baby The second daughter—Rose—was a student in a convent nearby They were all Roman Catholics by faith

Before I started questioning the inmates, I went round with Mr Xavier to inspect the house and its environs Later we sat down in the drawing room while the parents spoke about all what had happened in the house

Pelting Ghost

The trouble started five months ago, a couple of months after the wedding of the eldest daughter It began by stones falling in the bedroom occupied by Wilson and his wife They fell mostly during night and went on till about midnight On Saturday afternoons and Sundays a few stones fell during the day time also Though all the members of the house kept on a vigilant watch, no clues could be had about the origin of the throws

As the intens ty and frequency of the throws increased Mr Xavier consulted a soothsayer The soothsayer, after looking into anjanam eliya pronounced that the stone throws were the work of an evil spirit Xavier had to pay Rs 40 to the soothsayer to perform some 'manthras' to put a stop to the troubles Even after this manthra the stone throws cont nued

Having failed at manthras, Mrs Xavier made offerings and vows to the Madu and Borella churches, but still the troubles continued. At this stage they decided to bring their B shop home The Bishop arrived one Sunday after noon and conducted prayers and blessed all the rooms by sprinkling holy water He hung a "blessed" picture of St Anthony in the bedroom adjoining that of the married couple, and asked them to leave their present room and occupy the newly blessed one

Since there was no s gn of the ghost stopping its pranks except the fact that the stones ceased to fall in the room vacated by the couple, but started to fall with added vigour in their new bedroom, Mr Xavier went to the Bishop a second time and sought his advice The Bishop gave a "blessed" crucifix on a rosary with the instruction that it must be kept always under the pillow of Mrs Wilson Also they were asked to go to bed regularly after reciting their prayers.

Thovil

Although these instructions were strictly observed, the falling of stones in the room continued At this stage Xavier was advised by some of his friends to get rid of the troubles once and for all by getting some kattadiyas *from the Southern Province Through the help of some* friends a famous kattadiya was brought from Balapitiya After hearing the whole history of the troubles in the house, the Kattadiya suggested conducting a thovil (a devil dance)

Xavier and wife were reluctant to conduct the un-Christian ceremony in their house The kattadiya said that it was not necessary that the thovil ceremony should be conducted in that house He said that he could do that in his own house at Balapitiya if Mr Xavier was prepar ed to meet the expenditure which would come to Rs 400 Also he said that Mr Xavier himself could come to Balapitiya to witness the ceremony, although it was not absolutely necessary that he should be there for the tho vil to be effective.

The stipulated Rs 400 was paid to the kattadiya After a week the kattadiya came to Xavier's house and told that the thovil ceremony was performed and it proved to be very successful He said that during the thovil the spirit which was creating all the trouble in the house was brought to Balapitiya from Mutwal, and was made to promise that it would do no further harm On being questioned the spirit said that it was a Muslim woman who was murdered by her young husband when she was expecting a baby They were tenants of the same house many years ago, and now that there is a young woman expecting a baby in the same place where she was mur-dered she had come back to give that pregnant woman troubles

The kattadiya said that it was with great difficulty that he made the spirit of the Muslim woman leave the house At first she refused to leave She said that she would go only after killing the pregnant woman in the house Finally he succeeded in persuading her to leave the place on con dit on that a pregnant goat would be sacrificed to satisfy her He said that he had to search all over Balapitiya to

find a pregnant goat to be sacrificed Finally he spotted one two miles away from his house but the owner was reluctant to sell it to be sacrificed At any rate he was persuaded to sell it on payment of a fabulous price of Rs 100 The goat was brought and sacrificed at a second thovil performed the next day After the sacrifice of the goat, the spirit showed the sign of leaving the house by shaking the top branch of a jak tree in his compound

The Kattadiya left the house after getting Rs 200 more from Mr Xavier—Rs 100 for the goat and Rs 100 for the second thovil

Woman's Ghost

The very same night after the Kattadiya left, at about 2 a m the inmates of the house were roused up from their sleep by the cry of the young son of Mr Xavier On lighting the lamp the boy who was sleeping with his mother on her bed was seen on the ground On being questioned he said that a Muslim woman came and threatened to kill him He said that she held him by his hands and pulled him down from the bed Except for this incident, there were no stone throws that night

Two days later a fairly big stone fell in the married couple's room When Mrs Wilson woke up she distinctly saw the Muslim woman standing in the corner of the room On lighting the lamp, the woman's ghost disappeared

About this time Mr Xavier began to get a sort of skin rashes on his face and on the ear lobes Although various types of ointments and medicines were applied, the skin trouble began to spread to other parts of the body Moreover, in the mornings he often saw scratches of nail marks on his body

After listening to the stories narrated by the parents I went in to inspect the two bed rooms The house was a comparatively small one with only two bed rooms The rooms were partitioned by walls which did not reach the roof The married couple occupied one of the rooms The mother, the small boy and the unmarried daughter slept in the other room The father used to sleep in the drawing room Since the partition walls did not reach

the roof level all the three rooms were interconnected above

At my request three chairs were put on the outer verandah one for me, one for my wife and the third for the person who was to be questioned All the inmates of the house were questioned one by one individually They were asked to tell me only what he or she saw, and not what was heard from others in the family

More Information

Following additional information was gathered as a result of individual questioning —

The father, mother and the unmarried daughter have heard the sounds of falling stones in the eldest daughter's room Whenever they heard the shouts from the eldest daughter they went into that room with lighted lamps The mother and the youngest daughter have never seen any stones falling Mr Xavier once saw a stone falling when he went into the eldest daughter's room The son-in law has seen stones falling into his room, but he could not say from which direction the stones came Most of the stones struck the wall away from the adjoining room before they fell to the ground Twice stones fell on the top of the mosquito curtain of their double bed

Mr Wilson said that for the first three months he was mortally afraid about these happenings, but later got used to it From the day his wife saw the ghost of the Muslim woman he too was getting scared to sleep in that room

Mrs Wilson said that she had seen various objects in their room often upset Her husband's photo which was hung on the wall was missing for two days and on the third day it was seen hanging in the same place No stones fell on the picture of St Anthony which was hung on the wall at the instruction of the Bishop The ghost of the Muslim woman she saw in the corner of her room one night was dressed in a red saree She had covered her head with one end of the saree Because of her fear she could not sleep properly at night She used to make up for it by sleeping during the day From midnight to morning there was generally no stone throwing

Poltergeist

The last person to be interviewed was Rose, the youngest girl—the school student. She was a very healthy and good-looking girl. She was a student in the pre-S.S.C. class in a Convent. She went to her school regularly. She was very backward in studies. Although she was 17 and in very good health, she came of age only a few months ago.

From her nervous approach and disturbed attitude, I had no difficulty in concluding that she was responsible for the whole trouble in the house. Having decided that she was the poltergeist, I had to change my attitude of questioning. At this stage I called my son to the verandah from the drawing room where he was seated talking to Mr. Xavier and Mr. Wilson. I called him out with the aim of showing him how an inexplicable problem of this nature can be solved in a sensible and scientific way.

I ordered the girl to place her right palm on the handle of the chair on which I was seated, and I placed my right palm on top of her's. She was brought to such a mental state by hypnosis in a few minutes that she started telling me all what she had been doing for the last six months.

She said that she used to collect small stones from the convent gardens and keep them in her school-bag. She used these stones to throw into her sister's room at night through the opening above the wall separating the two rooms. She said that she was not angry with her sister or with Wilson. She could not give any reason for doing so.

She said that she was liked very much by her parents and she too liked them very much. Her brother-in-law was very fond of her. He had given her presents for the previous Christmas and her birthday. She took her brother-in-law's photo one day to show her friend at school, and returned it later. She had only one friend at school. She had no physical ailments, and had very good appetite for food. Being backward in studies, she received a fair amount of scolding from teachers, and sometimes from the father and mother also. Once she fainted at school when she had a profuse flow during menstruation.

I promised her that I would not tell her parents that

she was responsible for throwing the stones provided she would promise to stop it from that day She gave me the solemn promise that she would never do it again

After this we walked into the drawing room and summoned all the members of the house to assemble there As a rationalist my duty was to explain to them that there are no ghosts although people out of their ignorance, fear and the foolish talks of people who profess to know all about everything after death, believe But I avoided explaining to them all the facts about poltergeistic manifestations because I did not want to wound the feelings of the young girl nor did I want her to become the target of scolding and punishment from her parents

I simply told the parents that there would be no more stone throws in the house in future If there were further troubles, they were asked to inform me instead of spending money on soothsayers and exorcists I assured them that the story of the ghost of the Muslim woman was all sheer nonsense. His spending Rs 600 for the thovil ceremony was a sheer waste

Xavier's family had no trouble from that day

Explanation

The fact that there were no throwing of stones on weekdays during the day-time was due to the fact that the youngest daughter Rose was at the convent during that time Also there was no throwing after midnight because she went to sleep after midnight

Although she passed the puberty age Rose "attained" rather late for her age This showed that her sex glands were not functioning properly She was otherwise a healthy girl Her sex desires were latent in her, although it was suppressed due to conservative inhibitions She had no boy friends and had no freedom to have one The very thought of her sister enjoying the privilege of having a sex partner in the adjoining room created a sort of sex jealousy in her subconscious mind In her desperate state of mind she was aiming stones at her rival sister, not at her husband whom she liked and desired to possess in her subconscious mind That she had such an attraction

for Wilson was proved by her removing his photo to be shown to her one and only friend in school

As she was a backward student and got scolding both at school and at home she developed an inferiority complex in her She in her subconscious mind enjoyed at her ability to give trouble at home to all without anyone suspecting her

It is significant to note that although Rose was at home from the morning of Saturdays the throwing occurred only in the afternoon This was due to the fact that Wilson was in his sister's room only from Saturday afternoon

Stones first struck the wall away from the adjoining room always before falling to the ground This showed that the stones were thrown from the adjoining room through the gap over the wall

The boy s fall from the bed had nothing to do with the Muslim woman's ghost He must have dreamt in his sleep such a thing because that morning he heard about the Muslim woman s ghost from the Kattadiya Mrs Wilson also saw the same ghost as a result of hallucinat ons caused by hearing what the Kattadiya said

The skin rashes on Xavier s body were purely caused by infection and not by any activity of the non existing ghost The nail marks on his body was purely the result of his own scratchings in his sleep due to the irritations caused by the skin infection

It is quite natural for people who have fear about ghosts to attribute all types of unexplained happenings to ghosts!

Chapter—27

EXORCIST MARRIES A GHOST

A letter in the Silumina, a Sinhalese weekly, of 17-11 1963 from one Mr Elias Abeyawardena of Dehiowita mentioned about the haunted house of H C Mithruhamy, a colonist in the Gorkgahayinne Colony in the Dehiowita Electorate The letter gave a vivid description of how a ghost was playing havoc in that house, breaking pots and pans throwing stones in all the rooms putting sand in boiling rice and cutting clothes into bits Cooked food disappeared, plates cups, saucers and tumblers flew about in the air and broke into smithereens Members of the household purged to the point of death

The letter further said that Mithruhamy had become a pauper having spent all his fortunes on kattadiyas (exorcists) in an effort to get rid of this troublesome ghost He appealed to the Editor to get the "assistance of Dr Kovoor" to help Mithruhamy out of this tragic situation

On 1st December 1963 a party of journalists from the Lake House group of newspapers left Colombo with myself and Mrs Kovoor at 9 a m to Dehiowita The driver though given to rash driving at times was competent enough to drive safely along those winding and treacherous roads of the mountain terrain of the Central Province with steep hills on one side and deep gorges on the other

At a wayside shrine under a Bo-tree the driver stopped and told the party in the car that the climb from that place to Dehiowita was steep and very dangerous, and that it was customary for all drivers to stop there and make offerings to the deity to ensure safe journey up The journalists in the car looked at me as if to ask what my opinion was in this superstitious practice I said that since the driver was a gullible ignorant person if he is not allowed to do it, it might turn him into a nervous wreck throughout the rest of the climb, and that might

be enough to lead to a catastrophic accident 'Let him make his offerings and derive a mental confidence It is sure to give his suggestible mind a soothing effect like opium', said I

The villagers in the nearby boutiques recognized me in the car and collected round to have a 'darsan' of the reputed ghost hunter One of them was heard to say, 'Even Kovoor Mahathmaya is superstitious to stop his car and make offerings to the imaginary deity here'

After a round of hot coffee, the party started again On the way it started to rain and the visibility became very poor The driver was forced to switch on the head lights full and drive at a very slow speed Though the wayside deity was bribed it was not helping us in the least by keeping the sky clear and the roads dry

By 1 30 p m the party reached Dehiowita Enquiries were made at the small town about the route to the Gorakgahayinna Colony As instructed the car was stopped at boutique No 8 at Nooriya and the party got ready for the town mile trek to Mithruhamy s house led by a guide from the boutique

alone was asked to remain in the room to answer my questions. Wally proved to be an excellent interpreter. For five words of mine, Wally used ten words, and the reply came back in twenty words. The following information was gathered from Podihamy.—

Mithruhamy was selected as a colonist by the Government and was given one acre of cultivable land. He made that house in the plot, and was living with his second wife Podihamy and her children happily till 19th of April when an "evil spirit" started giving them trouble. He had two sons and a daughter by the first wife. All the three of them are married, and are living in the home village at Matale.

Podihamy had eight children of whom Kusumawathy was the eldest daughter, and was not married. She learned weaving, and was engaged in weaving at home on a hand-loom of her own. She earned some money by selling the produce of her cottage industry to the co-operative shop in the colony

The second girl Karunawathy, aged 18, who was backward in studies, was staying at home without any special work, except assisting the mother in household chores. Though inferior in intelligence, she was the healthiest and prettiest of the whole lot.

The third was a boy aged 16, employed as a salesman in a boutique, and was staying away from home. The fourth was a girl Siriyawathy aged 14. She was intelligent and was attending school. Punchihewa, the boy who went to fetch Mithruhamy, was the fifth and was attending school. The remaining three were very small children, two boys and a girl.

The trouble from the "ghost" started on 19th April 1963 when a small stone fell near Siriyawathy at about 8 p m. when she was preparing her lessons near a chimney lamp. She shouted out to her mother. As the stone came from outside through the single window of the room, they all went out and looked for the person responsible, but failed to see anyone.

Next day too at the same time a stone fell on Kusumawathy. She screamed and jumped up and looked through the window into the dark garden and saw a

figure running away They suspected the 23 year old son of a neighbouring colonist with whom Mithruhamy was not on good terms due to a boundary dispute Next day a complaint was lodged against the neighbour to the village Headman and later a case was instituted at the Village Tribunal This was rejected by the Tribunal for want of evidence

From what took place subsequently it was finally concluded that it was not the neighbour who was responsible but an "evil spirit' This opinion was finally confirmed by a soothsayer who was consulted by Mithruhamy for a fee of Rs 10 The soothsayer performed a lime-cutting ceremony but still the trouble continued

As days went by the activities of the 'ghost began to become diverse and more frequent Many incidents began to take place even during the day time On three occasions the warps on Kusumawathy's loom were seen cut by some sharp instrument Parts of the weaving machine were found missing but later they were found on the attic of the house Disappointed by the damage done to her machine with which she used to earn some money, Kusumawathy went to Matale to live with her mother's sister

Mithruhamy brought a party of kattadiyas from Deraniyagala and conducted a thovil ceremony spending Rs 350 Yet the trouble continued Once when rice was being boiled a fairly large hole appeared on the side of the pot and the contents flew out On several occasions the whole family had to starve because sand appeared in the pot of rice Certain nights inmates of the house had heard footsteps of persons walking about and sometimes knockings on the door

There was a temporary pause for a few days but later it started with renewed vigour This time plates cups saucers and glass tumblers were thrown from one room to the other They fell down and broke into smithereens Clothes which were kept locked up in a box were missing Later they were found in the attic A pot of water kept on a bamboo tripod was pushed down to the floor The only chimney lamp in the house was dashed to the ground by the ghost Podihamy took me out to show

the heap of broken pots and pans, and crockery, heaped at the foot of a plantain tree Two framed photos hanging on the wall fell on the ground, and the glass plates broke into pieces

A second 'thovil' was conducted by another set of kattadiyas from a neighbouring village, at a cost of Rs 440, yet the trouble continued

One day all the inmates of the house got severe purging This alarmed even the neighbours It was thought that the whole family would die out This necessitated conducting a bali on an elaborate scale at the expense of fellow colonists in the neighbourhood It cost them about Rs 500 The day after the bali ceremony the purging stopped completely, and all the neighbours had the satisfaction that the bali ceremony conducted at such a big cost was not after all in vain

Though the purging stopped completely by the bali, other troubles continued still As Mithruhamy had spent all his savings by this time he had to borrow money and conduct two more thovils. Although all the earlier thovils were failures, the fifth and the last one conducted on 3rd November 1963 by a party of kattadiyas from Hinguruhena proved to be successful in "driving away the ghost" from that house completely From that day there was absolutely no trouble

The fifth thovil being over by about 2 30 a.m., the kattadiyas slept the rest of that night in Mithruhamy's house Before they left the next morning a happy incident took place A 24 year old youth in the party fell in love with Karunawathy, and expressed his heart s desire to Mithruhamy The young man was a carpenter by profession and a kattadiya by hobby Like Karunawathy, he too was a healthy handsome fellow Mithruhamy, who was a penniless fellow now was only too glad to give his consent Karunawathy was consulted about the proposal by her mother It appeared that she was more keen than the young man for this matrimony Then and there the marriage was settled to take place on 11th November 1963 Karunawathy now lived happily with her carpenter husband at Hinguruhena

The last person to be questioned by me was Siriyawathy The only additional information obtained from her was that the "ghost" used to scribble with pencil in her exercise books, and to tear sheets from some of her school-books

Finally I went round with my wife and inspected the whole house and its surroundings A locked box, which was forced open by the "ghost", was shown to me by Podihamy It contained odd trinkets and some empty bottles and tins When asked whether they had any kind of purgative medicine in the house, Siriyawathy said that there was a packet of Epsom salt (magnesium sulphate) in that box She searched for that salt packet in that box, but failed to find it

By about 4 p m Punchihewa returned dead tired saying that he could not find Mithruhamy in the neighbouring village Having finished the enquiry we started the return journey at 4 15 p m

While in the car I gave to the journalists my analysis of the whole case From the available evidence it had to be accepted that many material objects were thrown about and damaged 'Material objects', I said "could be set in motion only by the application of force Ghosts even if they exist are regarded to possess no physical body; hence they cannot exert force Though the animistic belief of the primitive man is still held by gullible persons, there is absolutely no scientific evidence for the existence of spirits left behind by dead organisms

"In the absence of ghosts, we have to look for other agents responsible for those so-called mysterious happenings They remain mysteries only in the minds of those who attribute such actions to ghosts In my numerous investigations in so-called haunted houses, I have always been successful in detecting the human agent behind all such happenings It is true that the results of such mischiefs might affect the doer also This makes detection all the more difficult

'Such persons known as poltergeists are mentally sick They suffer from split personality (dual personality) What is generally done during one state of personality is not known or remembered by the other Poltergeists

even adopt ingenious methods to prevent detection by others. It generally develops in boys and girls of adolescent age due to some sort of frustration or mental conflict. Occasionally adults too suffer from this affliction. I know of a mother of two children who used to hide her own children's ornaments, and burn their diapers.

"The poltergeist in Mithruhamy's house was the 18-year-old daughter Karunawathy. The sex urge in this healthy, but not very intelligent, girl was not sublimated (diverted) by any other interesting occupation unlike her elder sister Kusumawathy. It was her subconscious jealousy at the profitable occupation of Kusumawathy that made her cut the warps on her loom. The scribbling on Siriyawathy's exercise books and tearing of sheets from her books indicate her subconscious jealousy at her being clever at her studies. These jealousies originated in her due to an inferiority complex in her. Probably she might have been dubbed by her parents as the most useless among their children

"The violent purging for all the inmates of the house puzzled me first. But when I heard about the Epsom salt story from Siriyawathy, I was fully satisfied that the purging was caused by the introduction of that salt in the food. Probably she might have put the contents of that packet in the food she was cooking. When she herself ate it in her normal personality, she too suffered from purging. It was not due to the bali which was conducted at a cost of Rs. 500 which stopped the purging. It stopped naturally when the last trace of the salt was evacuated from their bowels by continued purging.

"It is significant to note that the troubles in the house stopped for ever immediately after Karunawathy's wedding was settled. Her mental satisfaction made her become normal."

Chapter—28

GHOST ON RICHMOND HILL

Richmond College Galle is situated on a hill popularly known as Richmond Hill It is the oldest English educational institution in the Southern Province European missionaries who were responsible for starting English education in Sri Lanka during the 19th century selected ideal spots to locate their schools and Richmond Hill can be said to be the best among the lot

At the crest of Richmond Hill about three furlongs away from the main gate are the students hostels and the two bungalows meant for the Principal and the Vice Principal The hostels and the bungalows are reached by a winding road which takes a circuitous route passing through the various blocks of class-room buildings The first hundred yards or so of this road run through a small gorge cut in the hill As both sides of this stretch are overgrown with trees and bushes this part of the road is rather dark and gloomy even during day time For anyone passing this spot it is not uncommon to hear the cries of owls cicadas and monkeys at all times of the day

Here stands a magnificent specimen of a wild mango tree (atamba tree) with spreading branches overgrown with giant lianas whose numerous aerial roots and creeping shoots snake downwards forming a canopy over the heads of passers by Nobody knows the age of this tree

tree are said to be harmless there were occasions when lonely persons who had walked along this road after night fall had seen them and even got chased by them Such occurrences it is said generally take place on new moon nights

Numerous are the stories current among the hostellers of Richmond College about the ghosts which haunt the famous atamba tree These stories are handed down orally from old hostellers to new ones year after year Such talks by generations of Richmond College alumni have made the atamba tree on this hill famous all over the Southern Province

One of the most popular stories talked about is that of Ranavakke of Akuressa Ranavakke was a fresher at Richmond Three days after he joined the school and the hostel he got the permission of the boarding master and went to the town to buy some school books Being new to the place he lost his way back It was only after it got dark that he was able to reach the college gate As he entered the college gate he was afraid to walk alone up the hill along the dark road As he was linger ing about at the gate he saw another boy coming along and going up the hill He joined him and they walked together Ranavakke asked him whether he was going to the hostel There was no reply He asked a second time yet there was no response Without any further questions and answers both of them walked together Just when they came near the atamba tree to Ranavakke's surprise his companion suddenly metamorphosed into a dog and started to bark at him Frightened Ranavakke began to run The dog chased him up to the Library building a furlong away and then disappeared all of a sudden

On reaching the hostel Ranavakke ran into the dor mitory and fell down in a faint All the other boarders gathered round him and rendered first aid Even though revived Ranavakke was not in a position to give any coherent answer or explanation Next day Ranavakke had to remain in bed as he had developed high fever The hostel doctor examined him and declared that he was in a critical state In between his deliriums Ranavakke

told the matron who was nursing him all what had happened the previous night.

The boarding master informed Ranavakke's parents at Akuressa by telegram about their son's condition Next day the parents removed Ranavakke to Akuressa He recovered his normal health only after two months' continuous treatment at home He rejoined the school only at the beginning of the second term During the four years of his career at Richmond, Ranavakke never went out of the hostel after dark

I joined the staff of Richmond College in January 1943 During the first few months of my arrival I stayed in the Principal's bungalow at the top of the hill with one Mr Koshy, a senior member of the staff Though this large bungalow was meant for the Principal, Mr E. R de Silva, the then Principal, continued to stay in the Vice-Principal's bungalow near by

From the day I came into residence there I was forewarned about the dangers of the atamba ghosts by Mr Koshy and the boarding master Mr Thuraiyratnam To convince me who was sceptical about ghosts Mr Thuraiyratnam related to me a genuine experience of his a few months earlier

One day he was returning with two senior students after a late film-show The time was about midnight When they came just under the atamba tree they heard some disturbances among the foliage above They looked up, and all three of them distinctly saw a dark person seated on one of the branches of the atamba tree Thinking that discretion was the better part of valour, they proceeded to walk fast to get away from the danger zone Just as they started to walk, one of the students got a hard throw on his head with an atamba fruit Without turning back or looking up they continued to walk fast and finally reached the hostel panting for breath

The late Major Saa Bandaranayake, erstwhile Head Master of the Royal Primary School, Colombo, who was on the staff of Richmond College for over quarter of a century, used to narrate various anecdotes regarding the atamba ghosts Though I was not prepared to give credence to all these ghost stories, and tried to explain

off all such anecdotes as resulting from illusions and hallucinations of fear-stricken persons, it was only in 1943 June, that I got a chance of encountering a real ghost with my own eyes near the atamba tree.

The Secretary of the S. V. S—a cultural and social association of the senior day-students of the college—requested me to give them a talk at one of their meetings. These meetings were generally held after dinner. The one where I was expected to speak was held at the Parsonage at the foot of Richmond Hill near the main gate.

My wife too accompanied me to the meeting. As there were a lot of questions from the audience to be answered, the meeting was over only after midnight. As we were about to depart the parson, Rev. Fred de Silva, insisted that we should not walk up the dangerous part of the road without any light with us. He called his wife to bring a torch for our use. I declined the offer saying that both of us were not afraid of non-existing ghosts.

Both of us walked slowly along the dark winding road talking to each other. When we came to the atamba tree, my wife—a sceptic like myself—who had accompanied me boldly to cemeteries and haunted houses in search of ghosts, started talking about the foolish beliefs among the people of the place about the ghosts haunting the atamba tree we were passing. She told me, "Had it been any other two persons walking up this place at this time of the night, surely they would have seen some sort of ....". Before completing the sentence, she, who was walking on my left side jumped on to my right and clung on to me with a shrill scream.

I was severely shaken up at the strange behaviour of my normally sober wife. I held her in my arms and asked what the matter was. She could not utter a word I could feel the frail body of my wife quivering out of fear. Her heart was throbbing like a drum She struggled hard to speak to me, but failed. All what she could bring out was the words "Look, elephant".

I looked to my left where she pointed About ten yards away there stood in the dark an elephant motionless Like my wife I too got alarmed We stood motionless for a

minute in spite of my wife's insistence to run away from the place Though the elephant stood without any motion, both of us distinctly heard it producing a strange grunting sound

I tried in vain to disentangle myself from my wife's hold, to pick up a stone from the ground My wife prevented me from doing anything to harm the elephant, and thus create real trouble She started pulling me away from the place She wanted me to run away with her

Finding that I could not do any other thing under the circumstance, I shouted at the elephant at the top of my voice I noticed that the grunting noise stopped with my shout, but its right ear flapped once When I shouted a second time I realized that it was not a wild elephant but only a tame one with its mahout by its side

Leaving the elephant where it stood the mahout came forward in the dark and asked, "Kowthe Mahathmeya?" I scolded him for bringing his elephant to the hill at that time

'What, sir, where is the elephant?" The man continued, "That is Dr Wijeyaretne's car We came to go to the Principal's bungalow As the car could not pull up the steep hill we had to stop here, and the doctor went up the hill walking I am waiting here for him to return" Though my wife was feeling rather ashamed we had a hearty laugh

Explanation

The idea that all animate and inanimate objects can be haunted comes from the primitive conception based on the belief in transmigration of souls For such a universal belief there is no scientific evidence An idea need not gain validity simply because it is believed by numerous persons all over the world from generation to generation The delusional belief that the earth was the centre of the universe, and all the other heavenly bodies went round it was held universally till the time of Bruno Copernicus and Galileo For saying that the earth and the planets were going round the sun and not the other way, these astronomers were persecuted, imprisoned or burnt alive

The story of the haunted atamba tree of Richmond Hill was only a myth created and nurtured by numerous fear-stricken gullibles. With such delusions of ghosts in their minds it is not unnatural for those persons to experience ghostly incidents as a result of illusions and hallucinations.

It is quite possible that Mr. Thurairatnam and the two students passed under the haunted tree when there were monkeys on it. When they looked up with a frightened and deluded mind, a monkey might have appeared to them as a human being. The fall of the atamba fruit on the head of one of them might have been due to natural cause, and not a deliberate throw by an imaginary ghost.

Ranavakke too had the fear of ghosts in his mind when he came to the gate. The companion he saw, who changed into a dog later, also was purely the result of hallucination created in his mind by the fear of ghosts in his subconscious mind!

Though myself and my wife had succeeded in discarding beliefs in ghosts from our conscious minds, as a result of childhood beliefs and brain-washing by elders, such fears lingered in our sub-conscious minds. It was the result of pure illusion that the black car appeared as an elephant to my wife This illusion was triggered in her mind by the sub-conscious thoughts about the atamba ghosts. Similarly it was the result of hetero-suggestion on my own mind that the black car appeared like an elephant when she said the word "elephant". Since the figure of the elephant was well established in my mind, the opening of the door of the car by the driver who was sleeping in it, appeared to my mind as the flapping of the elephant's ear. When I saw the driver coming towards us, the wild elephant in my mind simply became a tame one, and the driver its mahout The driver's snoring in his sleep became very loud grunting in my suggestible *mind!*

Had we run away at the sight of the elephant without waiting there to verify, myself and my wife would have been instrumental in spreading one more fictitious ghost story connected with the haunted atamba tree of Richmond Hill like the Ranavakke and Thurairatnam episodes.

Chapter—29

GHOST OF THE DADALLA CEMETERY

Dadalla cemetery in Galle is one of the oldest burial places in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka People of the South dread this cemetery After sunset people avoid going near it for fear of ghosts

Stories are numerous about the ghosts of Dadalla Mothers have found such stories very effective to keep their unruly children under control

Many people claim that they have seen ghosts here with their own eyes Some say that they have been chased by them at night Others who have walked at night along the road by its side have seen a number of ghosts with flames coming from their mouths dancing round the tombs Residents in the neighbourhood are reported to have heard strange sounds and cries emanating from this cemetery at night

Motorist

Many years ago a wealthy resident of Cinnamon Gardens, Colombo, who was a horse-race enthusiast went in his old model car to the races at Boosa After the races and dinner at the NOH, Galle, the motorist was returning late at night to the Hikkaduwa Rest-House His car was full, and he asked his chauffeur to sit on the luggage carrier behind the car Thus the chauffeur was facing backwards and seated outside the car The motorist himself took over the driving

When they came opposite to the Dadalla cemetery, suddenly all the lights of the car went out. He stopped the car, and the chauffeur got down, came to the front and re-lit the carbide lamps Those days most of the cars were fitted with carbide lamps The chauffeur went back and got in to the carrier, and the party then proceeded When they got to the Hikkaduwa Rest House, they waited for

the chauffeur to come from the rear and open the car doors.

As the chauffeur did not come round, the motorist, not very pleased, got out of his car and went to the back to find his chauffeur laid out flat on the luggage carrier in a dead faint. Cold water was brought immediately and splashed on his face. The chauffeur was revived. When he regained his senses the chauffeur came out with his story.

Ghost

After the lamps had been re-lit at Dadalla and the car proceeded, a figure in white kept on coming behind the car. Each time the figure got close to the car it became bigger and bigger, and then two arms stretched out to seize him. When he shouted, the ghostly figure retreated and became smaller and smaller. As his shouts did not reach the occupants of the car because of the strong blowing and the roar of the sea, no help came to him, and then the figure came on again and again.

Quite unable to bear the horror of the experience, the poor chauffeur became unconscious. The next thing he knew was being revived at the Rest-House.

Somaratne

Somaratne who worked as a peon in a foreign firm in the Fort of Galle, stayed in a lane not very far from the Dadalla cemetery. Mr. Jayasinghe, the chief clerk of the same firm, who was responsible for giving Somaratne his employment as a peon under him, also stayed in the same lane, beyond Somaratne's house.

One evening at about 7 p m Somaratne's young wife, Menike, told her husband that there was no kerosene oil in the house and that the bottle lamp in the kitchen was fast drying up. As the dinner was not fully cooked Somaratne was compelled to go to the boutique on the main Galle Road to buy a bottle of kerosene oil.

Somaratne prepared a 'chulu' torch with dried leaves of coconut, and went to the boutique. As he was a bit scared to walk alone along the dark and lonely to get over his fear he started to sing loudly as he

Abdul Cader the boutique keeper was fond of talking to his customers who were mostly known to him as they all came from the neighbouring area Though Somaratne wanted to get back immediately as there was no light at home he could not do so as Abdul Cader started relating to him how a small boy who came to his boutique a few minutes ago fell into a ditch being pushed from behind by a ghostly figure He said that the poor boy was shivering from head to foot and had to be escorted home by a labourer who was going in the direction of the boy s house Somaratne joined in the talk and said that he too had seen several times such figures appearing and disappearing on the road near the cemetery

As it was getting late Somaratne re lit his 'chulu' torch got a two-inch iron nail from Abdul Cader and started back As he entered the lane he held the iron nail in his mouth between his front teeth He took this precautionary measure because he had heard that ghosts keep away from iron

A Woman Ghost

As Somaratne was walking along the lane he distinctly heard the sound of someone walking behind him He was afraid to look back He continued his walk pricking up his ears Yes he could distinctly hear the crunching of dr ed leaves behind him Instinctively he looked back, and saw the shadowy figure of a woman coming behind him at a distance of about 15 yards Somaratne got a terrible shock He stopped walking The ghost also stopped walking

yards As he was running fast he heard the ghost too running behind him Just when he reached his compound Somaratne looked back The ghost of the woman had vanished

Somaratne ran into his house after dropping the 'chulu' light in the garden, kept the bottle of oil on the verandah and threw himself prostrate on his bed

His wife Menike came running from the kitchen to know what had happened Somaratne could not utter a word as he was panting for breath After about 15 minutes, Somaratne sat up in his bed and started to talk like a mad person

Possessed

Somaratne called for some water His wife brought a large mug full of it He drank the whole of it and asked for more In a hurry Menike served dinner for him, but he did not eat even a single morsel Both went to bed that night very late without taking any food

At about 2 a m Somaratne woke up from his sleep with a loud cry Menike too woke up startled to see her husband walking about in the room aimlessly and talking erratically without any coherent meaning

He talked about himself as Seelawathy, the dead wife of a fisherman who lived in the neighbourhood He spoke in the voice of a woman about wanting to see her two daughters, although Somaratne and Menike had no children

Next day Somaratne was not fit to go for work. He continued to talk like a mad person Menike sent for her parents who lived about a mile away When the parents arrived there was a small crowd at Somaratne's house They held a conference and decided to seek the help of a famous kattadiya (exorcist) from Gintota

Thovil

The kattadiya came and gave his final verdict The trouble could be removed only by conducting a thovil Elaborate preparations were made to conduct the thovil It was conducted on the third day by a party of five kattadiyas attended by a retinue of drummers and sin-

gers During the thovil, Somaratne got into a trance, and danced about with the kattadiyas At one stage the chief kattadiya touched the forehead of Somaratne with his magic wand, and asked him many questions.

During the interrogation Somaratne said that he was the spirit of Seelawathy who died in the neighbourhood many years ago The kattadiya made her promise to leave Somaratne's body She said that she would leave him forever only if a rooster was sacrificed A rooster was brought and sacrificed that night, and the kattadiya proclaimed that the spirit had finally left Somaratne He made it doubly sure by nailing her to a jak tree in the garden The kattadiyas left next morning after collecting their dues

Though Somaratne stopped talking like the fisherwoman, he still remained restless and contemplative. At night he continued to wake up from his sleep due to nightmares He refused to go for work

Mr Jayasinghe, Somaratne's boss who stayed in the same lane, had two of his sons studying at Richmond College The eldest of the two—Cyril Jayasinghe—was a senior student under me During a conversation after a class Cyril told me about what happened to Somaratne.

More out of my desire to help myself in my own researches in supra-normal phenomena than to help Somaratne, I expressed a desire to make an investigation into the matter At Cyril's suggestion it was decided that I should go to Jayasinghe's house next Sunday

Investigation

I reached Jayasinghe's house at about 10 a m next Sunday Cyril took me to Somaratne's house Somaratne was seen seated on a chair on the verandah with a vacant look on his face. Cyril acted as my interpreter Although Somaratne was not very communicative to start with, he gave a complete description of what happened in the lane that fateful night

I tried to convince him that it might have been the result of hallucinations in his mind due to the suggestion created by listening to Abdul Cader's story about the boy who fell into the ditch But Somaratne was positive

that he actually saw the woman, and that she was definitely chasing him.

At this stage Cyril's younger brother came to call both of us to lunch. I decided to continue the investigation after the lunch. Cyril's mother had prepared a sumptuous lunch for her son's teacher.

While we were at lunch, Cyril's father asked me about the result of my investigations. As I was narrating Somaratne's experience in the lane a few days ago, Mrs Jayasinghe shouted out, "Ayo, I know what had happened. It was not a ghost. It was our Lily. That night she told me that she came running behind Somaratne".

At this stage I wanted to know who this Lily was. Mrs. Jayasinghe replied, "She is our servant woman. Last Monday she returned from her home at Matara late in the evening panting for breath. She said she had been running along the lane behind Somaratne".

Lily was called in, and I asked her to relate in detail what had happened that night. I gathered the following information:

Lily was a middle-aged woman who had served as a cook at Jayasinghe's house for about seven years. During the Sinhalese New Year she went home to Matara, and returned by the evening bus Normally this bus reached Dadalla before dusk, but that day, due to a puncture in one of the tyres it got delayed, and reached Dadalla at about 7 p.m. She got out of the bus in the dark at the stop opposite Abdul Cader's shop.

As she was nearing Dadalla in the bus, she began to get worried by the thought of having to walk alone the haunted lane at that time. It was a great relief for her when she saw Somaratne in Abdul Cader's boutique. She decided to wait near the 'domba' tree (Calophyllum inophyllum) by the side of the road till Somaratne came

When Somaratne entered the lane with the 'chulu' light in hand, she decided to follow him Being a sensible woman she knew the danger of being too close to a young man in a lonely lane in the dark. So she kept a respectable distance from him. After some time she saw Somaratne stop and turning back. As she feared going too near him, she also stopped.

When he started to walk fast, she too had to keep pace with him as she did not want to be left far behind in the dark lane Again when he stopped and looked at her, she too stopped After this she saw him running She too kept on running and finally got into Jayasinghe's house

When Lily ran into Jayasinghe's kitchen that evening she was panting for breath Mrs Jayasinghe gave her a sound scolding for coming so late along the lane alone

Lily said that she was not alone, and that she came running behind Somaratne who was returning from the boutique

In the afternoon I went to Somaratne with Mr and Mrs Jayasinghe, Cyril and Lily Lily was made to relate to Somaratne all what had happened in the lane that memorable night

From next day Somaratne went for his work as a fully cured man Poor man had to work over-time for many months to make up for the large amount spent on the kattadiyas and their thovil

Analysis

Although there are no scientific proofs that living organisms—from bacteria to man—leave behind dis-embodied spirits when they die, men from primitive ages have believed so and much beliefs are held and maintained even today by ignorant men however educated they may be It is a scientific fact that energy cannot be produced without matter Matter and energy are interconvertible Movements cannot be produced without the application or supply of energy

It is utter foolishness to think that spirits without material bodies are capable of talking shouting, walking, running or throwing objects about Such being the case, if someone sees hears or touches a ghost it has to be attributed to illusion or hallucination triggered by delusional beliefs in ghosts That such experiences are not real, but purely the result of imagination is proved by the fact that almost all persons who have claimed to have seen ghosts have seen them only at night and properly dressed Even if there are spirits, are there spirits for their

costumes also? I am still to find a person who has seen a ghost completely nude It is impossible for a spirit without brains to perform conscious acts or to talk It is also not possible for a disembodied spirit to take a visual form

Those who were buried at Dadalla died in their respective homes in different parts of the country or in hospitals Even if there are souls to get out of their bodies at their death why did all these spirits come from different parts of the country and congregate at Dadalla? Is it because they like to guard the decomposed remains of their bodies? If it is so, surely the ghosts of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru must be roaming about all over the world because their ashes would have spread far and wide through air and the waters of the sea

As most of us are indoctrinated from our childhood by ignorant elders about ghosts, it is not surprising that many persons dread going near burial grounds at night. Why is it that ghosts are not seen in or near grave yards during day?

This type of foolish beliefs is universal It is not peculiar to the people living near Dadalla alone With such foolish beliefs in mind it is not surprising that they get deceived in their senses by ghostly illusions Nobody dares to verify as he or she does not get the courage to go near and investigate Had Somaratne taken courage and walked up to the ghost of the woman, or asked her some questions he would have found that it was Lily and not a ghost He could have thus avoided becoming a psychopath, and spending a lot of money on kattadiyas Had it not been for my investigation and the accidental disclosure about Lily's walk behind Somaratne, this story would have been added to the stock of numerous similar mythical ghost stories connected with Dadalla If a similar investigation was held on the spot about the boy's fall in the ditch it would have been proved that his fall *was the result of some other cause, and not due to any* push by a non-existing ghost

Somaratne became a psychopath and behaved like a possessed person When persons behave and talk like other persons, it has to be diagnosed as glossolalia Their

behaviour under such mental troubles is closely related to their acquired beliefs and social habits Those who believe in transmigration of souls behave and talk like possessed or reborn persons There is absolutely no objective reality in their talks Such glossolalial talks are wrongly interpreted by some as the entry of holy ghost, possession of spirits or reincarnation Somaratne's talk like the spirit of a dead fisherwoman was simply the result of his own hallucinations caused by the wrong beliefs imbibed by h m from the society in which he grew up

It is the occurrence of such attacks of glossolalia which makes some people believe in the existence of ghosts, and give ample scope for kattadiyas to make money

In my quest after spirits I have slept in haunted houses Both myself and my wife have gone to cemeteries at night in search of ghosts There we have stood on mounds and tombs over dead bodies, but have never seen a single ghost Once I gave a broadcast interview from the Kanatta cemetery in Colombo at midnight There were no ghosts to be seen there But the man who was hold ng the microphone for me could not keep it steady because of shivering due to fear!

Chapter—30

SPIRIT POSSESSION AND EXORCISM

During one of my periodic visits to my ancestral home, I made a short stay with my friend Sri M. C. Joseph, the President of the Rationalist Association of Kerala, and the Editor of the journal **Yukthivadi**. Sri Joseph who is a famous speaker, lawyer and author is one of the greatest thinkers of his country. Though not a scientist he is more scientific than many so-called scientists. The incident described in this article was the subject of his conversation with me one evening.

Pothusery High School is about 3 miles from Irinjalakkuda town in Trichur District. The opening ceremony of a new Science Block was conducted on 14th April 1961. Sri Joseph was invited to perform the opening ceremony. Sri Kesavan Vaidyar (Ayurvedic physician) was one of the speakers on this occasion. The function over, Mr Joseph and Mr Vaidyar were returning in the same car to Irinjalakkuda. The Sanskrit Pundit of the National High School of Irinjalakkuda Mr C. Madhava Menon also got into the same car.

While talking to each other in the car, Mr Menon spoke about a calamity which was happening to him since five-and a half months. He said that his 12 year old daughter Rajalakshmi who was studying in the Second Form was possessed by an evil spirit since the death of his mother-in law. 'Every day at five in the evening a mortal fear grips her and she starts screaming very loudly. She continues to cry for about two hours. Hearing the cry all the neighbours come running. To whatever questions put to her by the members of the family and the neighbours she does not give any reply, but continues to cry. Finally she collapses tired, and falls into a deep sleep.

"At about 9 p.m. she wakes up, takes a frugal meal and goes to sleep again. Next day at 5 p.m. she repeats

her cry again During the day if anybody asks her why she was crying she used to simply say that she does it out of fear" Mr Menon discouraged others asking Rajalakshmi about the incident always as he did not want to remind her about it and create more mental worries

As the intensity of the cry was increasing day by day Mr Menon got alarmed and took her to Dr C P Eipe of Irinjalakkuda After listening to the history of the case Dr Eipe decided to consult Dr A I Kurian and Dr V K Narayana Menon of Trichur As a result of the joint consultation of these three doctors Rajalakshmi was treated medically for more than a month Still there was no sign of any cure All the three doctors opined that it was due to some mental trouble and advised Mr Menon to consult a psychiatrist at Trivandrum

Instead of taking Rajalakshmi to the psychiatrist as recommended by the three doctors at the insistence of some of his relations Mr Menon brought home a famous astrologer called Chandran from Nadavarampu Astrologer Chandran, after his mumbo jumbo of casting cowries on a pattern design on the floor, said that it was due to a spirit probably that of her own grandmother, which got into her while she was passing the place where the grandmother was cremated, on her way to the bathing tank His verdict was that the spirit could be driven out of Rajalakshmi by the famous charmer Mr Vasudevan Namboodiripad of Mullavazhi

Namboodiripad was brought home and the exorcising ceremony performed A charmed thread was tied on Rajalakshmi's right arm As there was no change in Rajalakshmi's condition even after this she was taken to the ayurvedic physician Thycad Mooses It was while Rajalakshmi was under the treatment of this person that the present conversation in the car with Mr Joseph and Mr Kesavan Vaidyar took place

Mr Menon said that Rajalakshmi was a very intelligent girl, and good at her studies Because of her present troubles she had missed one year's study

At this stage Mr Joseph suggested to Mr Vaidyar that it may be a mild type of hysteria, and it may be useful to give her one of the sedative drugs now available

'Let us both go together and see this girl one day", said Mr Kesavan Vaidyar To this Mr Joseph agreed

Mr Menon got down from the car near his house after getting an assurance from Mr Joseph and Mr. Vaidyar that they would visit his house two days later

Dead Grandmother

On 17th April both of them went to Mr Menon's house From enquiries, they gathered the following information —

It was on the 1st of November 1960 that Rajalakshmi's maternal grandmother died From next evening Rajalakshmi started her frightful cry During the five and-a-half months there was not a single day she did not cry Mr Joseph called Rajalakshmi near him, affectionately patted her and made her sit near him.

In a very endearing way Mr Joseph asked Rajalakshmi why she cried every day To this she gave her normal reply—'Fear"

"Fear can be about a person an animal, an object or an incident Can you tell me your fear is about what?" asked Mr Joseph

Rajalakshmi hesitated to give an answer to this question Then Mr Joseph said, "One can get frightened of a dog coming to bite or a bull coming to butt People are frightened of snakes elephants or even imaginary ghosts Can you tell me about what you are frightened?"

"I cry because I feel that I am rising up in the air"

'Do you feel that you will fall down from the height to which you are lifted?" asked Joseph

'No, a darkness comes before my eyes When I see the darkness I get afraid"

"Why are you afraid of darkness? We all see darkness every night Haven't you seen darkness before grand mother's death? You had no such fear of darkness before her death"

"There there he is keeping that page open to frighten me" Rajalakshmi said pointing to the book a younger brother of hers was reading seated on a chair some three yards away

Picture of Yama

Mr Joseph took the open book from the young boy On the open page there was the picture of Yama seated on the back of a buffalo holding a trident in the left hand and a lasso in the right in the act of noosing the head of Satyawan The caption under the picture was "Yama noosing Satyawan to Be Taken to His Yamaloka"

"I am afraid to see that picture Don't show me that If I see that I may cry again and faint", said Rajalakshmi

"Why are you afraid to see this picture? It is not a real story", said Mr Joseph

"When my grandmother was seriously ill", said Rajalakshmi, "our people took her from the bed and made her lie down on the floor This cruel thing they did when she was struggling hard to breathe She died immediately After grandmother's death I cried a lot Then my aunt told me that my grandmother was taken away by Yama to his country in the South, and there was no need for any more crying"

Mr Menon had eight children—seven boys and Rajalakshmi the only girl She was the pet of her grandmother Rajalakshmi was so fond of her grandmother that she felt the death of the old lady very much She was shocked by the sight of her grandmother being put on the ground before her death

Mr Joseph who is a psychologist, knew then and there that the darkness which Rajalakshmi saw before she started to cry was the hallucinatory vision of Yama appearing to take her also away like the grandmother Her feeling of rising up in the air resulted from her mental experience of being lassoed and lifted up by Yama

Mr Joseph explained to her that Yama, devils, angels, ghosts, demons etc, do not exist in reality, and all of them are imaginary creations of foolish people Since Mr Joseph found it difficult to convince the innocent girl who was brought up in such mythical beliefs, he asked her whether she knew the story of the wolf and the lamb Rajalakshmi said that she knew the story well

Mr Joseph then asked Rajalakshmi to narrate the story When she had finished telling the story, Mr Joseph

asked her "Can wolves and lambs talk?' To this she replied 'No' Then Mr Joseph explained to her that the story of the wolf and the lamb like the story of Yama coming to kill and take away human beings was only fiction

Mr Joseph explaining further said "The story of the wolf and the lamb was an imaginary story written to show how wicked people can do harm even to innocent persons under lame excuses Just as there are no wolves and lambs capable of talking there is no Yama capable of putting ropes round dying persons"

Rajalakshmi being an intelligent girl understood Mr Joseph's explanations well She gained such confidence in him that she took the book from Mr Joseph's hand and looked at the picture carefully for some time and said "All these days I was under the impression that this was a true story I don't think I will cry any more."

Two days later Mr Joseph visited Mr Menon s house again Rajalakshmi greeted him with a smile and said 'Sir I did not cry yesterday and the day before." The grateful parents came forward but could not find adequate words to express their gratitude for the complete cure of the mental trouble from which their only daughter had suffered for five and a half months

Explanation

In Kerala as in all backward countries certain foolish and inhuman customs are practised by Hindus when a person is about to die The dying person is taken down from the bed and made to lie on a single mat or on plantain leaves spread on the floor facing a door to the South This practice came from the foolish belief that Yama the god of death has his country in the South and he must be given all facilities to take the dying person's spirit southward through the open door If, by chance a person happens to die not in the direct line with the door the wall or the walls on the southern side have to be broken open so that the dead body could be taken out for cremation directly southward

Another equally foolish practice they follow is to consider that every thing that has come in contact with the

dead body as impure and polluted They burn all such things along with the corpse It is for the sake of avoid ing the burning of a valuable cot that the dying person is taken down from it just before the last breath Also they consider that all inmates of the house where the death has taken place as unholy and impure for 15 days They become pure only after a purification ceremony on the 16th day During this unholy period the members of the dead person's family are not fit to take part in any social function If any of them happen to touch another during these fifteen days that person also becomes polluted and has to be purified School going children whose relations have died are prohibited from attending schools lest they pollute other children

The impressionable mind of Rajalakshmi was badly wounded by the sight of her beloved grandmother being pulled down from her bed when she was painfully strug gling for breath The procedure adopted by the grown ups at the time of her grandmother's death, the cremation of the corpse in the same garden they lived together with what her aunt told her, made Rajalakshmi believe that Yama comes to take dying persons away to his country in the South This belief was further confirmed from what she studied at school from her Malayalam Reader

In the Malayalam Reader **Paddhavali**, Part 3, on page 42 there is a lesson under the caption "Even Death Can Be Conquered" This was an incident in the story of Satyawan and Savitri Narada the ascetic is said to have told Satyawan that he would die one evening exactly one year later Yama's-arrival on the back of the buffalo on the appointed day to kill Satyawan and take his spirit with him was illustrated in the book by the said picture But, as a result of the pleadings of Satyawan's devoted wife Savitri to Yama he spared Satyawan's life and departed This story was written by the author to stress the value of a wife's devotion to her husband

For the imaginative mind of Rajalakshmi 5 p m was the evening time when her grandmother died and she became hysterical each day at that time as a result of conditioned reflex 5 p m, according to her delusion was the time for the arrival of Yama The darkness she saw before her was the hallucinatory image of Yama

She imagined that like her grandmother she too would be taken away by Yama. This was the real cause of her cry, and not the possession of her grandmother's or anybody else's spirit. That fear disappeared from her mind when she got convinced that the story of Yama was all mere bunkum.

Those writers who produce books for children do not realize the harm they do to the children by introducing non-existing demon-like characters in their stories. While it may be interesting reading for adults, it is apt to leave frightful impressions in the tender minds of children Nightmares in small children are the results of dinning into their minds such false stories about ghosts, fairies, devils, demons, jinn, cyclops, giants, angels, and the evil effects of charms, curse, evil eye, evil tongue, vas kavi, bad omens, inauspicious times etc. Modern psychologists object to the introduction of such nonsensical and harmful topics in books meant for children

Just as stammering is artificially created in children who are born with left-handedness by foolish elders compelling them to use their right hand for eating, writing, etc., artificial fears also are created in them by foolish elders telling them imaginary frightful stories about demons and gods, and punishments from them when they are offended. From statistics of patients in mental hospitals it has been amply proved that most of the neurotic patients are the victims of artificial fears created in them in their childhood days in the name of religion.

Rajalakshmi suffered for more than five months, for no fault of hers The poor girl had to pay the penalty for believing the nonsensical stories she was compelled to learn both at home as well as at the school.

Chapter—31

WIMALA THE DIVINE HEALER AND SOOTHSAYER

Wimala the teenaged girl of Alamkulama near Anuradhapura obtained the divine power of healing and predicting all of a sudden ten years ago It was the Goddess Valli who performed miracles through her

Her fame spread far and wide in the country Men and women from far off places began to flock together to the small devale (Temple) in her garden on all Tuesdays and Fridays These days poojas were conducted throughout the night with the accompaniment of drumming and chanting During the pooja Wimala got into a trance and performed miracles of healing and predicting

Patients who are said to have been declared as incurables by doctors were brought to Wimala by their relatives And what did Wimala do? Just laid her 'holy' hands on the heads of the sick persons and annointed their foreheads with a sacred oil All this for a nominal 'offering' of Rs 2 folded in 14 betel leaves Persons who could not afford even this small offering were given free treatments

Wimala's fame as a soothsayer was better known all over the country than her fame as a faith healer This brought to her house people from distant places On Tuesdays and Fridays rows of cars could be seen parked on the main road opposite the lane leading to Wimala's devale Though the stipulated fee was only Rs 2, the rich patrons who came from Colombo paid much more For many, it was not a fee, but an offering to Goddess Valli

Many who consulted Wimala came for the purpose of getting information about persons who had robbed them A few came to know about the success or failure of their new ventures Wimala never failed to answer questions

from her devotees, and Wimala's father never failed to collect their offerings

The patrons never came back to Wimala a second time complaining about the failure of her cures or predictions Instead, they went to some other 'better" soothsayer

During election times Wimala's garden was crowded with prospective political candidates Both winning and losing candidates went away after getting Wimala's blessing for victory After the elections were over, the successful candidates came back to Wimala with their supporters to make thank offerings Those who lost, of course, consulted "better" soothsayers before the next election

Wimala's holy mediumship was a lucky windfall to her parents From the day she became a medium ten years ago, the financial condition of the family began to improve by leaps and bounds As the financial resources improved, the condition of the devale also began to improve. More and more pictures of diverse types of polycephalic and multilimbed gods, some with human bodies and animal heads, began to decorate the walls of the devale Brass lamps were added to be kept lit throughout the night A special seat was constructed for Valli A special multi coloured dress was made for Wimala to wear during the poojas More drummers and chanters were hired A few gongs and konch shells were procured to be sounded during the pooja

A special altar for burning camphor was constructed A stone slab was planted in front of the devale for dashing coconuts on it Jasmine flower garlands decorated the pictures of gods A kind of "sacred" oil for annointing the heads of the sick was manufactured A large framed picture of Valli was placed opposite Wimala's seat Two brass lamps burned on either side of this profusely garlanded picture Devotees offered flowers before this picture

Mr E C S Fernando of Jaela, a member of the Ceylon Rationalist Association, who knew Wimala's parents, succeeded in convincing the members of that family that it was not Valli or any other spirit which was making Wimala behave like a possessed person, but only some sort of mental disease

From April 10 1964 much to the disappointment of her parents and numerous devotees Wimala refused to play the part of Valli Even after repeated coaxing of her parents the drummers and the chanters Wimala refused to take part in the pooja She simply refused saying that she wanted to be like other women

Interview

On September 21 1964 Mr E C S Fernando a member and former Secretary of the Ceylon Rationalist Association came with a friend of his Mr W P Somatilleke employed in the Examinations Department to fix up an appointment with me to bring Wimala for psychiatric consultations 26th September 1964 9 30 a m was fixed for the interview

The party which arrived on the appointed day comprised Messrs Fernando and his friend Somatilleke Somatilleke s mother who is a retired school teacher Miss Kodikkara who is an English school teacher Wimala and her paternal grandmother Wimala's parents though expected to come with the party failed to arrive from Anuradhapura in time

I started my investigations by questioning Wimala s grandmother in solitude Miss Kodikkara acted as the interpreter I was able to collect the following informations from the grandmother —

Wimala s present age is 20 years When she was 10 years old one day she fainted while at school The school authorities sent word to her parents Wimala was taken to the Government doctor at Anuradhapura The doctor opined that there was nothing radically wrong with her and that the faint might have been due to either indigestion or a heavy stomach Some two months later when Wimala was in the fields she had a second attack of fainting She was taken to the doctor again This time the doctor advised the parents to take her to Dr Grilmayer the Viennese neuro psychiatrist At the General Hospital Colombo Dr Grilmayer recorded Wimala s brain wave on the electro-encephalograph He prescribed some sedative drugs As there was no further trouble Wimala continued to attend her school

Witchcraft

A few months later Wimala fainted again. This time the parents and their close relatives decided that it was due to some evil spirits that Wimala was getting these fits. They all agreed that it was time they consulted some able kattadiyas instead of "wasting time" by consulting doctors. Wimala was thus taken to a kattadiya. He confirmed that Wimala was tormented by an evil spirit, and prescribed a thovil ceremony. At the thovil ceremony the kattadiya tied a charmed thread on her arm, and a yanthra (suraya) round her neck. From that day onwards Wimala not only fainted, but began to mutter incoherent words during her fits.

Wimala's parents stopped sending her to school As her condition was getting from bad to worse her parents, on the advice of some well-wishers, decided to take her to a famous devale at Pahalagama in Puttalam District. dedicated to goddess Valli. The kapurala of this devale listened to the whole story, and after a mumbo-jumbo pooja and chant told Wimala's parents that it was necessary to conduct three special poojas on three consecutive days to drive away the evil spirit in her.

They were asked to go back and come on a fixed date to perform the first pooja. The Kapurala prepared a list of articles to be brought by them for conducting the three poojas perfectly. One of the numerous articles prescribed by him was a chain made of pure gold as long as Wimala's height.

Poojas

Next few days were spent in collecting the various articles including the gold chain 4 ft 10 ins long Apart from the heavy cost in procuring all the stipulated articles, the Kapurala had to be paid Rs. 137, Rs 147 and Rs 157 respectively for the three poojas. On all the three days Wimala got into a trance and danced about with the Kapurala during the poojas.

On the third day during an ecstatic dance Wimala shouted out that she was Valli She said that since the devale was not kept properly in good condition Valli was

not going to come any more there Instead, Valli would be visiting Wimala s house in future This was however a big blow to the Kapurala's future profession.

After the third day the party came back to Alamku lama Wimala now had more charmed threads on her arms and neck Though the Kapurala guaranteed that Wimala would have no more troubles she got into a deep trance next day During this trance she demanded a de vale in the garden for her to conduct daily poojas

Thinking that this was a command from Goddess Valli the father got a devale made in his garden spending a substantial amount With the help of hired drummers and Kattadiyas daily poojas were conducted in the new devale Every day when the drumming started Wimala got into a trance The neighbours who collected at the devale during the pooja confirmed that it was Goddess *Valli who was talking through Wimala*, and started worshipping her Nightly poojas went on for about two weeks Finding that it was too much of a strain on Wimala to get possessed every day, the father decided to *have all night poojas on Tuesdays and Fridays only*

The news about Goddess Valli's appearance in the body of Wimala began to spread in the country and numerous persons started coming to the new devale to get Valli s *blessings, and to have their problems solved The parents* were no more worried about their daughter They were indeed happy that Goddess Valli had found favour with Wimala to take abode in her They took it as a blessing *from the gods They* prospered financially too *This pros* perous period continued for ten long years bringing material profits to the family and imaginary benefits to thousands of credulous fools

Since the poojas were stopped from 10th April 1964 at Wimala's own request, the devale was demolished and the drummers and chanters sent away Wimala was free from any more possession During the course of four months after the poojas were stopped Wimala fainted on two occasions But she never talked or behaved like Valli

At this stage Wimala's grandmother was sent down stairs, and Wimala was called up for questioning With

Miss Kodikkara as the interpreter I was able to gather a lot of information about Wimala s personal and intimate life and also the working of her sub conscious mind She was put under hypnosis and was made to understand that there is no Valli in existence hence she will not get possessed in future by a non-existing Valli

Though she knew to read and write Sinhalese language fairly well she expressed a desire to continue her studies She welcomed the idea of a married life for her Her face brightened up when I convinced her that Valli will not possess her any more She told me that the first thing she would do after going back to Negombo from where they came was to write to her mother at Alamkulama that she is free from any more troubles

The party left after Mr Somatilleke took a few photographs of Wimala with me and my wife

Analysis

To begin with Wimala had only a mild attack of hysteria Had she continued to be under the treatment of Dr Grilmayer probably she would have become normal soon The first mistake the parents did was to consult the kattadiya Primitive men believed that both physical and mental diseases were caused by evil spirits Primitive man s remedy for any disease was witchcraft Due to the rapid growth of medical science witchcraft has disappeared from civilized countries giving place to hospitals and qualified doctors Unfortunately witchcraft in the form of thovil bali magical cure etc is still resorted to by ignorant people in backward countries

When the kattadiya pronounced that Wimala s trouble was due to the possession of an evil spirit she behaved and talked like a possessed person as the result of suggestion on her feeble mind At the devale too it was due to the suggestible nature of her mind that she behaved and talked like Valli Later when she heard the rational arguments of Mr Fernando refuting the idea of possession by Valli her sub-conscious mind got free from the thought of Valli It was the effect of Mr Fernando s talk that made her decline to take part in the poojas from April 10th My hypnotic suggestions helped to eradicate

Occultism, by consulting all the fortune-tellers in his Department, can advise the Government about all future events!

Business firms too can employ fortune-tellers on their staff. Such fortune-tellers can divulge to the Board of Directors of the firm all the secrets in the Finance Minister's Budget proposals, and those firms will be able to make immense profits!

Survey

From an investigational survey made in three isolated urban areas, I arrived at the alarming discovery that 97.5% of the people of Sri Lanka are believers in occultism and psychic phenomena. Surprisingly, in the 92% gullibles in an urban centre, there were one Minister of State, two parliamentarians, one civil servant, two university dons (both Ph.D.), three advocates (one of them a Q.C.), two medical specialists, one super grade school principal and one managing director of a flourishing business concern.

About 60% of the people of this area have consulted soothsayers at one time or other, and some of them were vehement in defending the mysterious powers of the occult.

As superstitions flourish on the ignorance and credulity of people, the only way to wean out the gullible mass from the exploitation of diviners is to challenge them to come forward and prove their miraculous powers in public under fraud-proof conditions!

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
53972

completely even the thought of Valli from her mind. To-day, I am informed, she is leading a normal life awaiting matrimony

Soothsayers

Nobody has or ever had the power of predicting future events by occultism It is, no doubt, possible to make scientific predictions based on intelligent observations Weather, celestial occurrences, famines, cyclones, prosperity, etc can be predicted by scientific observations.

Although many persons believe and claim that there are some who have divine or mysterious powers for predicting or healing, there is absolutely no scientific evidence whatsoever to confirm such beliefs. Fortune tellers are all frauds. In some cases they are mentally deranged persons. Nonsensical talks of dysthemics and hysteries are interpreted by some fools as divine utterances Wimala never healed anyone or correctly predicted anything Gullible fools simply accepted her glossolalial talks as coming from Goddess Valli, and gave suitable interpretations Similarly when she placed her hand on the heads of the sick or annointed their heads with the so-called sacred oil, it might have had some psychological beneficial effects on persons with easily suggestible minds In some cases it is possible to have harmful effects if the persons concerned have subconscious fear of "malevolent spirits"

If there is one person who has extra-sensory perception or occult powers to predict events or foresee things, he or she can become the richest person in the world in no time Will such a person give away the name of a potential winner in a horse race, or the winning number in a sweep for a paltry sum of two or three rupees when he or she can win the big prizes?

If this is true, occultists should be recruited to serve under the Government. Those occultists can help, the CID for crime detection; the Minister of Commerce and Trade by predicting commodity price fluctuations all over the world, the Minister of Finance to prepare the country's budget; the Observatory Department for making absolutely correct weather forecasts, etc In short, the State can create a new Ministry for Occultism The Minis

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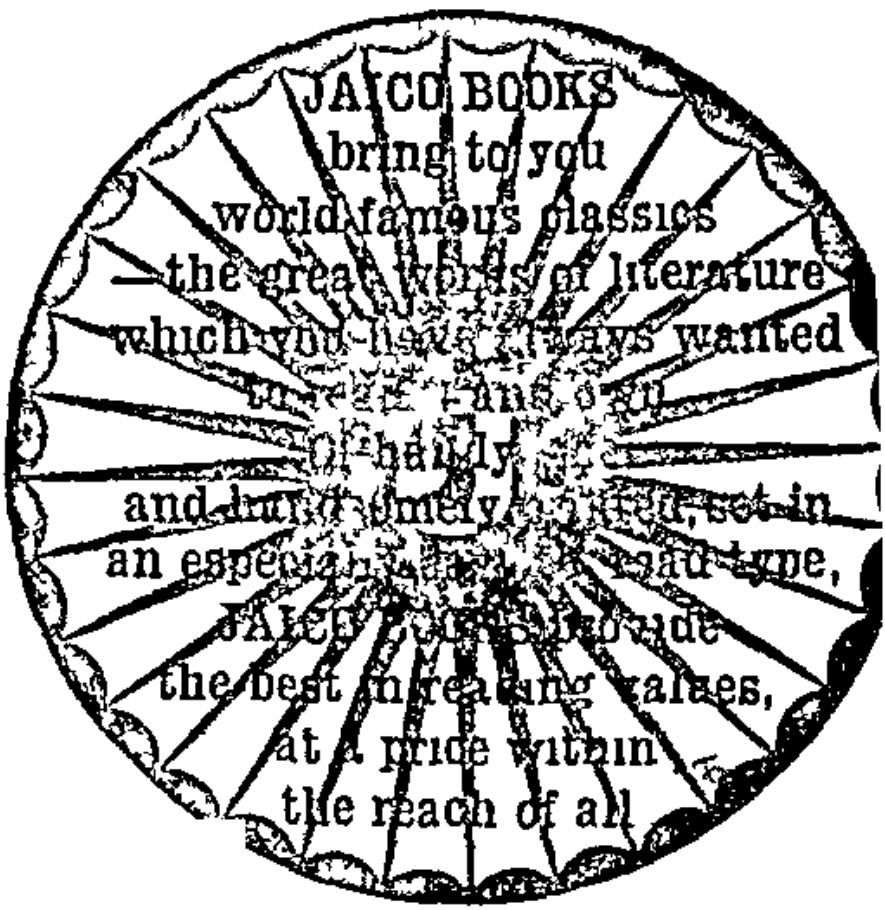
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